

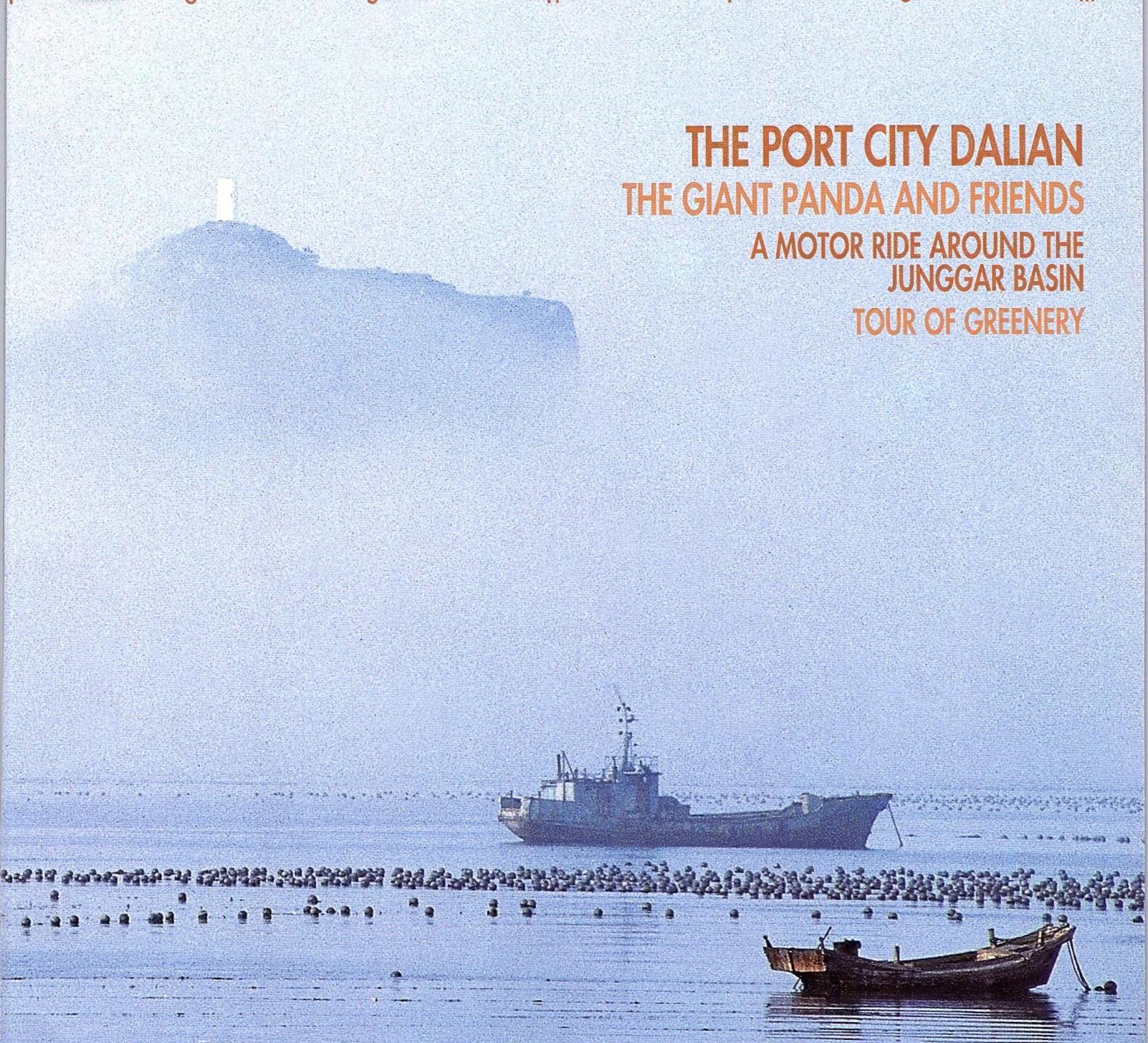
AUGUST 1998

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T O U R I S M

THE PORT CITY DALIAN
THE GIANT PANDA AND FRIENDS
A MOTOR RIDE AROUND THE
JUNGGAR BASIN
TOUR OF GREENERY



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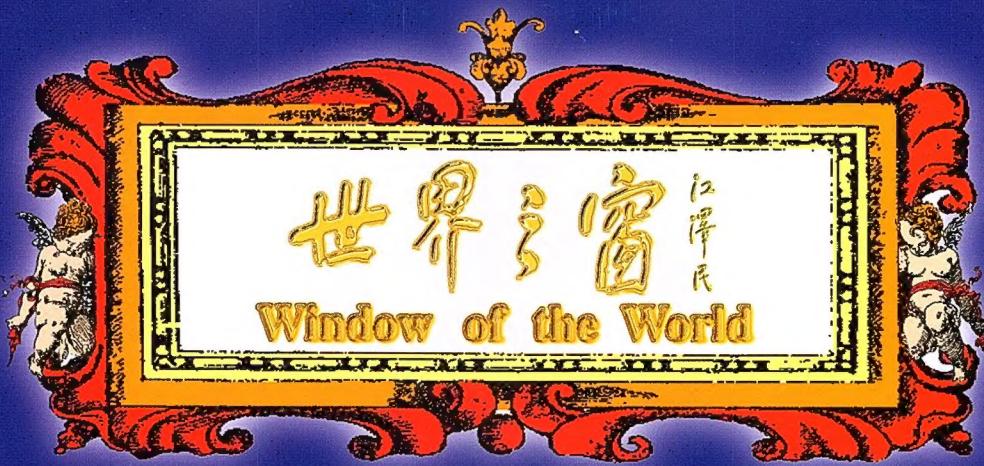
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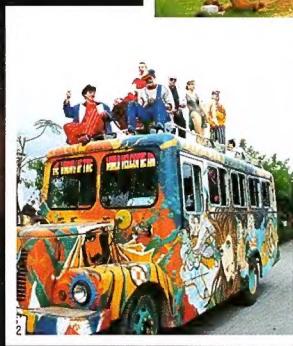
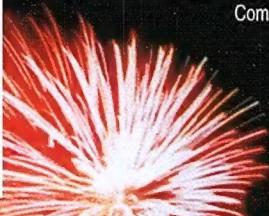


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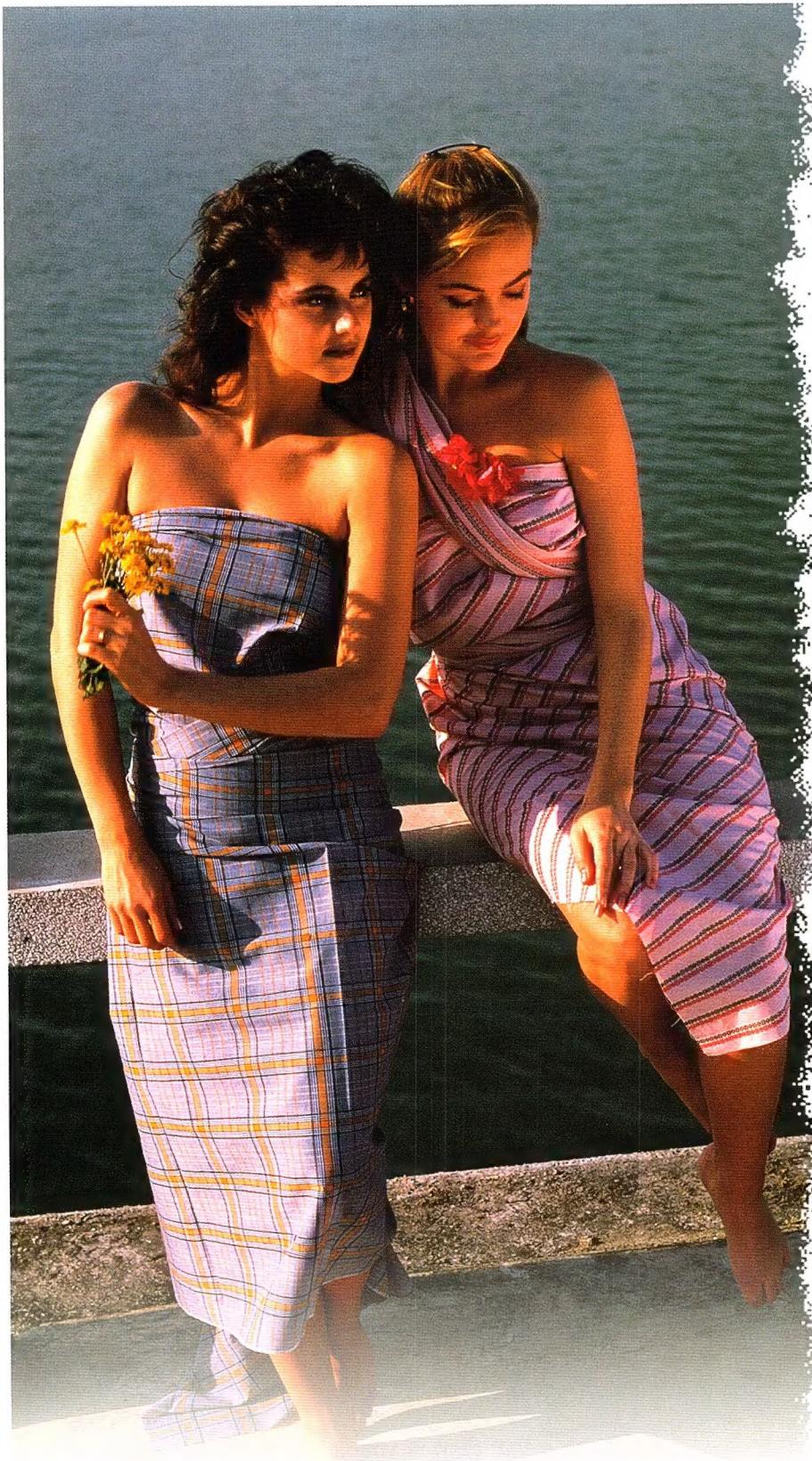


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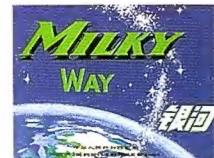
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HIGHLIGHTS

Dalian — Harbour City in Northern China

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Dalian, a coastal city in Northeast China's Liaoning Province, provides tourists with a lot of choices: you may have leisure time on its charming beaches, enjoy its rich nightlife, go shopping in the busy and bustling Tianjin Street, observe buildings of different architectural styles, or visit Lushun and other suburban scenic areas...



NATURE

The Kingdom of Giant Trees

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

CUISINE

Korean Dishes

Photos by Li Guangping Article by Lang Yan

SHOPPING

Mongolian Metalwork

Photos by Shan Xiaogang Article by Bao Jiu

ENCOUNTERS

Encounters with a Hotel Owner in Zhongdian

Photo by Li Zhixiong Article by Hua Yu

No. 217 August 1998

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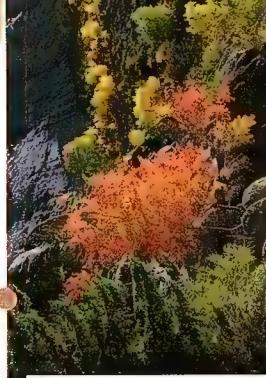
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CHALLENGES

A Motor Ride Around the Junggar Basin

Photos & article by Liu Hui

A group of photographers toured the Junggar Basin in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The vast wilderness and the beautiful scenes excited them, but at the same time, they had to deal carefully with their "sick" jeep, which broke down repeatedly on the way.



LEISURE

Anning Holiday Resort: Hot Springs Bathing

Photos & article by Li Zhixiong

CULTURES

Fengdu — the Ghost City

Photos by Xie Guanghui Article by Lang Yan

A few hours' sailing from Chongqing downstream along the Yangtse River will bring you to Fengdu, known as the Ghost City. The temples there present you with scenes from hell. Tourism is thriving there these days because of the Three Gorges project. While some may feel frightened, most tourists visit the place joyfully, tasting local dishes, and buying ghost-mask souvenirs.

ShanXiaobang
Cover: A Seascape in Dalian

SPECIAL TOURS

Tourism Among the Forests

NOVELTIES

Zhongyan — A Place of Romance

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong

EXPERIENCES

A Vacation in Xishuangbanna

Photos & article by Josh Cohen

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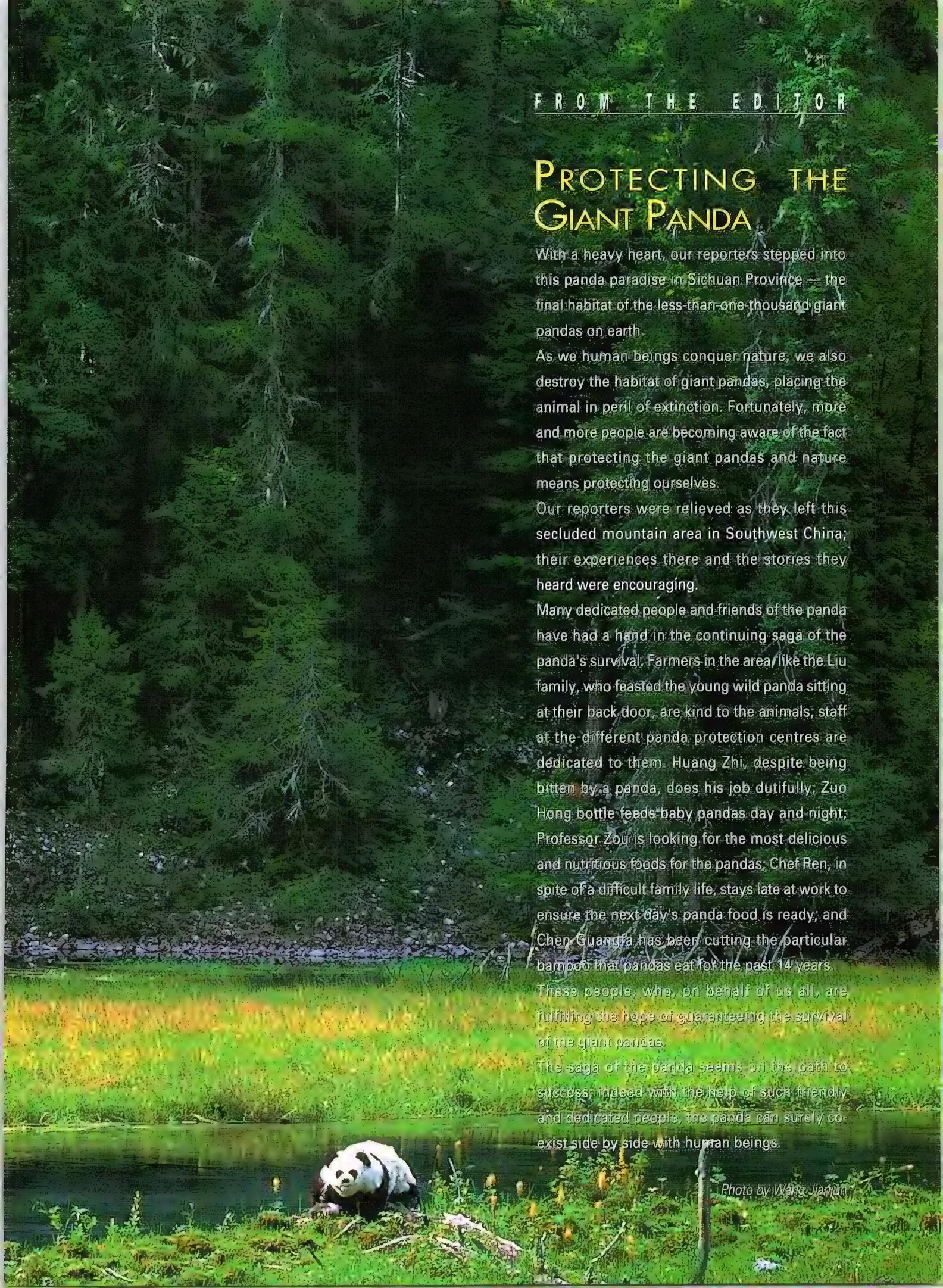
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A large, high-quality photograph of a giant panda sitting in a dense, green forest. The panda is facing the camera, its black and white fur contrasting with the surrounding foliage. The background is filled with tall trees and lush vegetation, creating a sense of a natural habitat.

FROM THE EDITOR

PROTECTING THE GIANT PANDA

With a heavy heart, our reporters stepped into this panda paradise in Sichuan Province — the final habitat of the less-than-one-thousand giant pandas on earth.

As we human beings conquer nature, we also destroy the habitat of giant pandas, placing the animal in peril of extinction. Fortunately, more and more people are becoming aware of the fact that protecting the giant pandas and nature means protecting ourselves.

Our reporters were relieved as they left this secluded mountain area in Southwest China; their experiences there and the stories they heard were encouraging.

Many dedicated people and friends of the panda have had a hand in the continuing saga of the panda's survival. Farmers in the area, like the Liu family, who feasted the young wild panda sitting at their back door, are kind to the animals; staff at the different panda protection centres are dedicated to them. Huang Zhi, despite being bitten by a panda, does his job dutifully; Zuo Hong bottle feeds baby pandas day and night; Professor Zou is looking for the most delicious and nutritious foods for the pandas; Chef Ren, in spite of a difficult family life, stays late at work to ensure the next day's panda food is ready; and Chen Guangfa has been cutting the particular bamboo that pandas eat for the past 14 years.

These people, who, on behalf of us all, are fulfilling the hope of guaranteeing the survival of the giant pandas.

The saga of the panda seems on the path to success; indeed with the help of such friendly and dedicated people, the panda can surely co-exist side by side with human beings.

Photo by Wang Jianjun

HIGHLIGHTS

Dalian — Harbour City of Northern China

Dalian, originally a small fishing village called Qingniwa, later became a city of foreign adventurers. In the last hundred years it experienced many changes. Now the former fishing village has become a prosperous port city, like a striking mirage on the vast sea in northern China.

Its name was first changed from Qingniwa to Daluni and then to Dalian. This evolution marked the changes of the harbour city as a whole. Tsarist Russia once intended to turn Dalian into a city like Paris and later, Japanese invaders wanted to transform it into another Tokyo. However, history thwarted their ambitions, and Dalian stood on its own.

The most dramatic changes took place over the past decade or so, giving Dalian a modern new look. Travelling in Dalian today, tourists can have leisure time at its seaside resorts, visit the ports of Dalian and Lüshun, and look at the historical sites to recall the port city's past. *Photos and article by Shan Xiaogang*





For the best view of the sea at Dalian, visitors must go to the southern side of the city, where a high green mountain lies from east to west, blocking the city noise, creating an area of peace and tranquillity.

Seeking Seaside Pleasures

things that you can choose from. The group of granite tigers weighing over 2,000 tons are believed to be the largest animal group sculpture in the world. Although named Tiger Beach Pleasure Ground, there are no real tigers but many marine animals there. Performances of the charmingly clever dolphins and sea lions often have audiences roaring with laughter. After the performance is over, visitors can have a kiss or a photo taken with these animals at the cost of 10 yuan.

Visitors can then take a cable car to cross the water. From the air, you can have a marvellous panoramic view of the seashore: the Northern Great Bridge suspended in the mountain valley, the Swallow's Nest Ridge, the steep cliffs standing by the sea, and the surging waves and their sprays when hitting the rocks or caves in their way.

Travelling westward along the Binhai Road Central, you will reach Fujiazhuang Beach, which is the best and the only free bathing beach in Dalian. In the summer afternoons, multitudes of local people, as well as visitors, flock to the beach, setting up their colourful umbrellas and parasols.

Useful Information:

- ◆ **Transport:** To Tiger Beach Pleasure Ground, take No. 102 trolleys at Qingniwa Bridge; to Fujiazhuang, take No. 401 bus, also at Qingniwa Bridge; to Xinghai Bay and Shengya Sea World, take No. 201 tramcar at Railway Station then change to No. 202 trolleys at Xinggong Street. No buses in between these three places, but taxis are available.
- ◆ **Recommended itinerary:** Visit Tiger Beach Pleasure Ground and Swallow's Nest Ridge in the morning; swim and taste seafood at Fujiazhuang Beach at noon; and then visit Xinghai Bay and Shengya Sea World in the afternoon. Notes: Beware of eating shellfish in summer, be sure it's clean and properly cooked. As seaside accommodations are always in great demand, it's recommended that tourists lodge in the city and travel by taxis to seaside parks.

Along the Liberation Road and through a valley, at the southern end of the road you come to the famous Laohutan (Tiger Beach) Park, now a pleasure ground, where there are many





Previous page: Fujiazhuang Beach is a favourite for both visitors and local people.

1. The Dalian Ocean Theatre in the Tiger Beach Park

2. Chairs are prepared for the beach-goers.

3. Some have brought their own tents to the beach.

4. The newly built aquarium

5. A baby having fun on the beach



Useful Information:

- ◆ **Morning exercises:** All city parks are good; Laodong (Labour) Park is the best.
- ◆ **Walking or Jogging:** People's Park with an area of 40,000 square metres is the most spacious. Its lawns remain green all the year round.
- ◆ **Body-building:** Each hotel and holiday village.
- ◆ **TV Tower:** Open to visitors daily from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Special public buses are available from the Labour Park east gate.
- ◆ **Football:** Matches often take place in various stadiums and playgrounds. There is a football fans' bar in the Wanda International Hotel and a football fans' association on Qiqi Street.
- ◆ **Bicycles:** Rental available at all hotels.
- ◆ **Excursions:** The Wanda International Hotel offers its customers free excursions on Sundays, activities including bicycling and seaside picnicking. Tel: 3639688.
- ◆ **Seafood:** Golden Stone Beach Management Committee, Tel: 7900595.

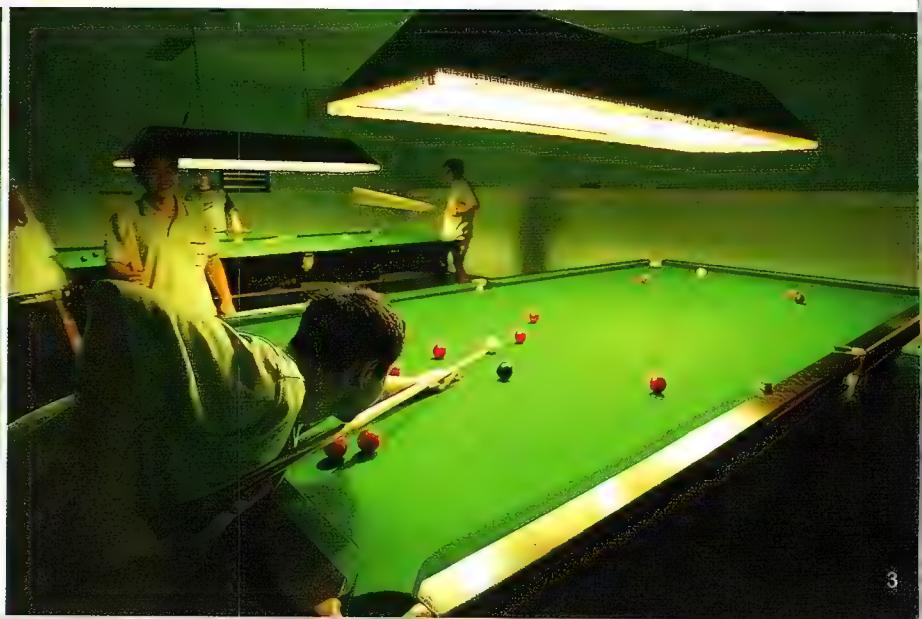
Dalian's seaside offers holidays in every style. Those who do not want to stray far from the city can go to the southern seaside; those who love tranquillity can go to Bangchui Island; and those interested in

bustling activities can spend their time in Fujiazhuang. After enjoying yourself with plenty of sunshine, waves and sand, you can either go by boat to an inshore islet for fun and

fishing, or just for some quiet time on the seaside rocks. For the more athletic types, there are more other options: a walk to Jiajiao Bay to collect shells and view the reefs, or to Shicao Village, Tiger Beach, Swallow's Nest Ridge and Black Reef to see wave-eroded caves and peculiar rocks.

Further away from the noisy city, there is the Jinshi (Golden Stone) Beach, which features the natural beauty of the area. Here, holiday-makers can stay in the European-styled hotel built by the seaside. They can watch the sun rising over the sea in the morning, go jogging on the sandy beach, and watch the fisherfolk going out to and coming back from the sea. After a few days, you will be completely relaxed and totally refreshed. Golden Stone Beach is also famous for its peculiar rocks.

Visitors can also visit the hunting grounds at the southwestern corner of Golden Stone Beach, where you can do target shooting, as well as field hunting, and furthermore, you can taste some wild game there. In Golden Stone Beach there is also a golf course by the seaside.





5



6

1. The Golden Stone Beach has a golf course built by the sea.
2. The indoor tennis court at Yinfan Hotel
3. Playing billiards, an evening pastime
4. Painters like to get up early
5. A corner inside the Golden Stone Beach Hotel
6. At Golden Stone Beach, you can test your shooting skills at the hunting club.



Spending a Romantic Night

Useful Information:

- ◆ **Hotel Furama:** No. 60, People's Road. Tel: 2630888.
- ◆ **Friendship Club for Foreign Traders:** Eastern side of Zhongshan Square. Tel: 2813740.
- ◆ **Zhongshan Square Weekend Concert:** From about 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. summer evenings.
- ◆ **Night fair at Tianjin Street:** The busiest time is around 8:00 p.m.
- ◆ **Night Sightseeing:** Zhongshan Square, Friendship Square, People's Square, Rongsheng Square, Labour Park, Qingniwa Bridge, Tianjin Street, and the Railway Station Square.
- ◆ **Itinerary:** Start walk at sunset to the Railway Station Square, Qingniwa Bridge, Labour Park, Friendship Square, Tianjin Street and Zhongshan Square, then go by bus to People's Square, and return.

The summer nightlife in Dalian is rich and colourful.

At Zhongshan Square, which is surrounded by European-style buildings and known as the first music square in China, concerts of different types are held at the centre of the Square. Sometimes, during an evening party, the audience is invited to take part in fun contests such as beer drinking, hamburger eating, football kicking, etc. Throughout these contests, there are often bursts of applause both on and off the stage.

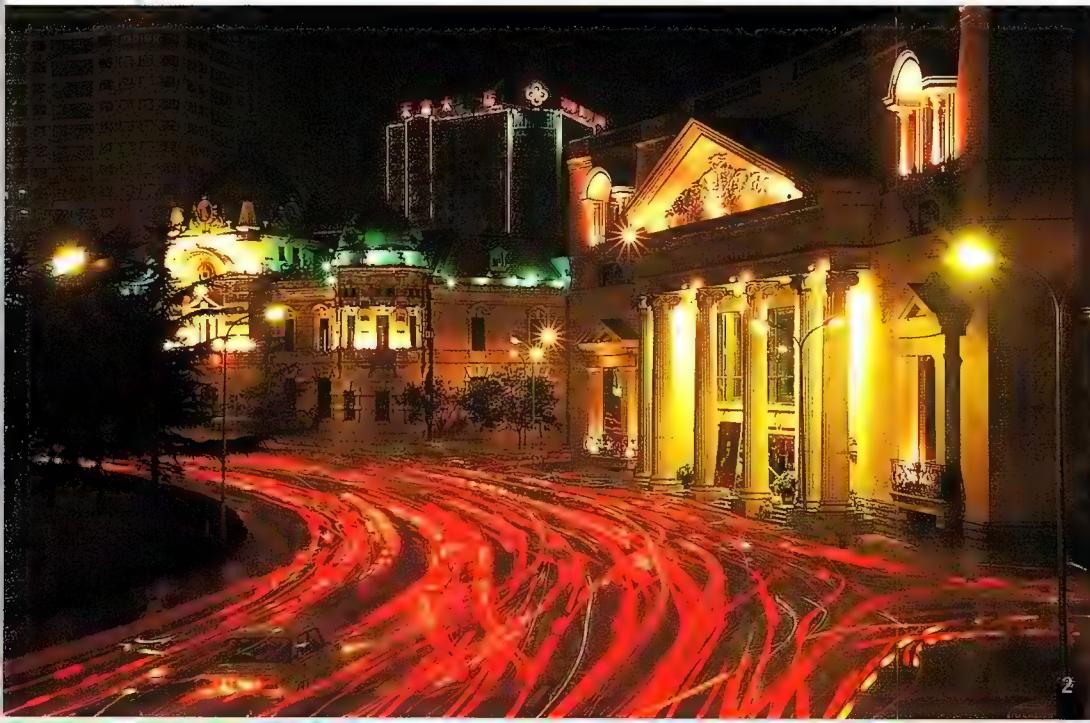
Friendship Square, though small in size, is a very convenient place for shopping for all kinds of products.

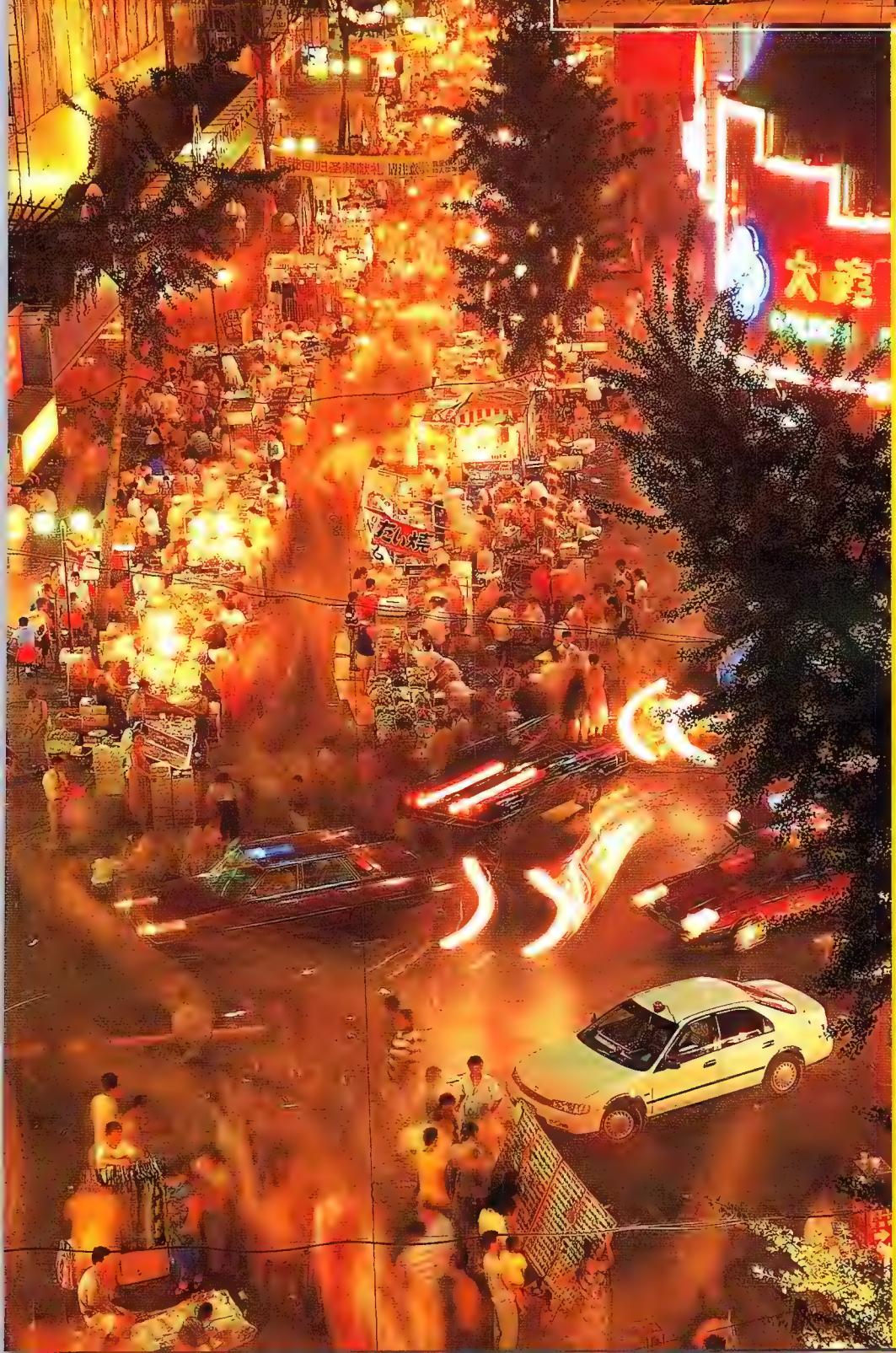
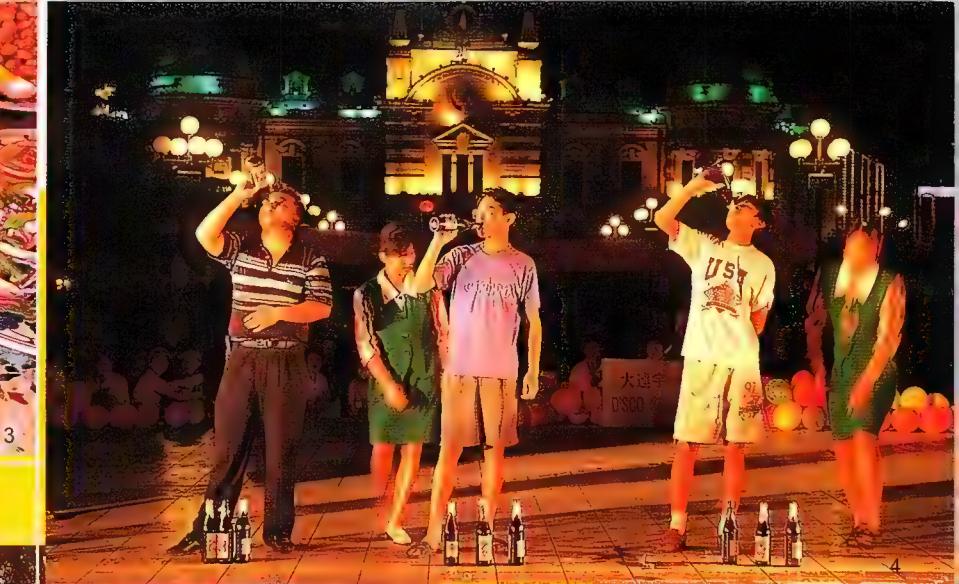
People's Square in front of the city government has huge European-style buildings on three sides, and the towering Monument to the Red Army of the Soviet Union at its front, with a large stretch of woods on either side. On summer nights, when the street lamps are turned on, the square is shrouded in a quiet, romantic atmosphere. It is a good place for young couples to take a walk.

Leaving Zhongshan Square and walking along Shanghai Road, you'll very soon reach Tianjin Street known as "The First Street in the Northeast", which is lined with clothes shops and food stalls on either

side. Ablaze with lights, the street and lanes are crowded with people and filled with the fragrance of food.

Other night activities include a tramcar trip to watch the night scenes, enjoying foreign food and classical music in the light of candle lamps in Hotel Furama, enjoying Chinese and foreign songs and dances in the Friendship Club for Foreign Traders, or attending a bonfire party at Fujiazhuang Beach.





1. Performances are provided during the weekend at the Foreign Traders' Club.
2. Zhongshan Square at night
3. Colourful and tasty seafood dishes
4. A beer-drinking contest held at Zhongshan Square
5. The busy and bustling night market on Tianjin Street



Useful Information:

- ◆ **Transport:** Lüshun City is 45 kilometres from the city centre of Dalian. Visitors can take a tramcar to Heishijiao and change to a bus; it takes about 40 minutes.
- ◆ **Lodging:** Generally a one-day trip is sufficient. Visitors can stay overnight at the Lüshun Hotel at a rate of 180 yuan a night.
- ◆ **Itinerary:** Start out in the morning, visit the northern fortification on the Eastern Cockscomb Hill, then the forts at Wangtai and Erlongshan; lunch in Lüshun City and visit the Prison, Museum and the Japanese- and Russian-style buildings; visit Baiyu Mountain in the afternoon.



Visiting Reminders of War

The reason that Dalian developed into a city mainly resulted from the Russian and Japanese invasion and their forced

concession. Development started from Lüshun City at the seaside on the southwestern side of Dalian. Because of its geographical position, Lüshun has always been considered to be of great strategic importance since ancient times. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and the notorious war between Japan and Russia both broke out here.

The Baiyu (White Jade) Hill in the centre of Lüshun is a good place to have a view of the Lüshun Port. It has a cable car on its main side, a winding road along its slopes and a small path leading from its foot to its top through a forest.

The Baiyu Tower atop the hill was originally "The Loyalty Tower" built by Japanese troops to flaunt their military strength and to commemorate their men killed in the war between Japan and Russia. But today it has become a tourist vista which provides a panoramic view of the city. Looking around from the tower, Lüshun's strategic location comes clearly into sight.

Below the Iron Tower there is a museum of naval weapons, and on the eastern side of the tower lies the Wanzhong Tomb, the collective tomb of 18,000 Chinese massacred by Japanese troops during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95.

In the northeastern part of Lüshun are undulating hills, where the main Russian fortifications were constructed. Bullet and shell holes on the northern fortification on the Eastern Jiguan (Cockscomb) Hill are still distinct today, and visitors can walk in the large entrenchment constructed with reinforced cement.

Other spots worth a visit in the city are the sites of the Japanese-Russian Prison and the Lüshun Museum. The Japanese-Russian Prison was the largest prison in Northeast China during the periods of their occupation.

1. The point where the Russian fort was broken by the Japanese 90 years ago
2. A cannon left by Russians atop East Jiguan Hill
3. The White Jade Tower
4. The room where the inmates were executed in the Japanese-Russian Prison
5. The port of Lüshun which has held great strategic importance since long ago
6. Inside the fortress on East Jiguan Hill



3



4







A result of history, Dalian's early buildings were mainly constructed in Russian style combined with French, Greek and Roman architecture. During the Japanese occupation, in addition to further developing

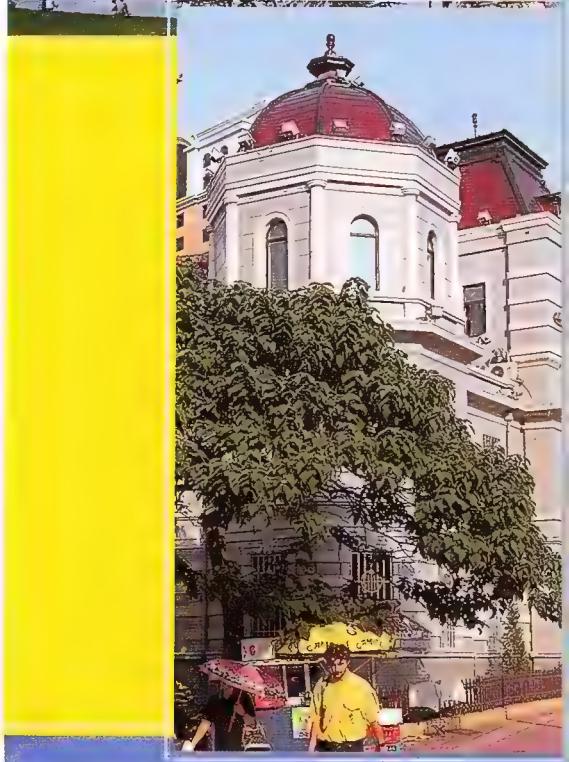
the European style, some modern, Japanese-style buildings were also constructed. Today, many of these well-preserved foreign-style buildings give Dalian a unique feature. The area to the north of Jiefang (Victory) Bridge was the first place where reconstruction was planned after tsarist Russia leased Dalian by force.

The most magnificent classical European-style buildings are concentrated around the Zhongshan Square. As the centre of the city, the square is constructed in the radial scheme often adopted in Europe. The 10 streets radiate from the square like the golden rays from the sun, and the buildings in between the streets stand like flowers facing the sun. Some of the buildings have pillars and corridors evolved from the Greek and Roman styles; some have the Byzantine dome that was popular during the Renaissance; some have staircase-like French roofs; some follow the Baroque style; some have Gothic roofs; and others are combinations of the styles of Oriental and Western classical architecture.

There are also many Japanese-style houses and villas in Nanshan Street, Lingqian, Tiyuchang, December 9th Street, Golki Road and other areas.

Previous page: Seeking pleasures on the sea

Observing Foreign and Modern Buildings





Useful Information

- ♦ **Transport:** Go to the various centres by taxi and then walk around on foot.
- ♦ **Itinerary:** For a one-day tour, first go by taxi to Victory Bridge and look around Unity Street, then walk to Zhongshan Square and Nanshan Street. At noon take a taxi to Tiger Beach along Liberation Road. Afterwards take a taxi westward to the Black Reefs and return to May 1st Square by tramcar to visit the Stadium and Minzheng streets. From there take a bus for People's Square, and end your tour on the eastern side of December 9th Street.



It would be regrettable if a visitor to Dalian fails to take the tramcar that runs clattering along the street. Not only comfortable and fast, the tramcar fondly reminds people of the past.

Dalian's tramcars have a 90-year history. Three lines still exist along with nearly one hundred trams. Among the three cities (Dalian, Shenyang and Changchun) that still have trams, Dalian is the best in terms of traffic and road conditions, and is the only city that makes its own trams.

It is not just a means of transportation, but an unmatched enjoyment to ride a tramcar passing houses and villas of various architecture, living quarters, office buildings and busy shopping centres and going towards the beautiful seaside. Sitting inside a tramcar, you can also see more of the residents' lives in Dalian — people going to and from work, roaming the streets and shopping, or meeting friends for a leisurely time. ☎

Seeing the City by Tramcar



1. Children in an old residential area
2. Doing morning exercises
3. Many of the tramcar drivers are young women.
4. Public transportation is plentiful in Dalian.



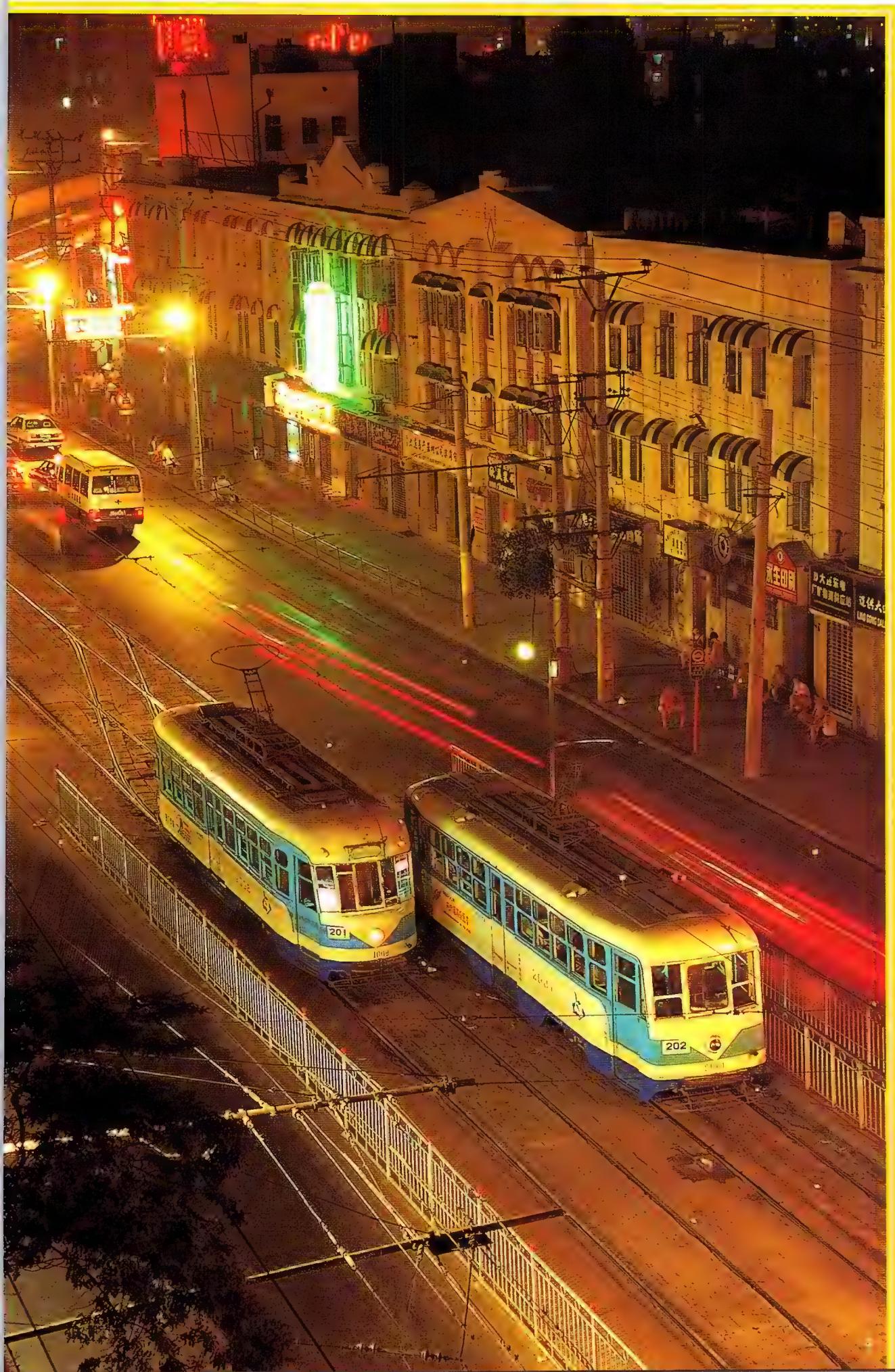
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Tips for the Traveller

- ♦ **Transport:** There are direct flights to Dalian from Hong Kong, Beijing or Shenyang; several trains run between Dalian and Beijing each day; and buses from Shenyang are also available. To go to the islands in Changhai County, fast passenger ships leave daily from Dalian Port.
- ♦ **Accommodation:** Hotel rates in Dalian are higher than other coastal cities, especially during tourist seasons.
- ♦ **Food:** Dalian's seafood is cooked in Shandong style, or a mix of Chinese and foreign styles. Famous dishes usually consist of local sea produce, including sea cucumber, scallops, abalone, prawns and red porgy. They are fresh, tender and crisp. Note: In July and August, shellfish is inadvisable in Dalian.
- ♦ **Shopping:** Dry marine products are available on Buxing Street close to Qingniwa Bridge. Clothes are sold in Tianjin Street and at both the Railway Station and Dalian Port you can find the South Korea Clothes City. Other famous commodities are found at the Dalian Glassware Factory and Dalian Shell Carving Factory. The New Friendship Store on the People's Road is one of the modern shopping centres.
- ♦ **Vista Points:** The Port Building is the place to view Dalian Port; the TV Tower to view the whole of Dalian City and its night scene; Hotel Furama to view the seaside.
- ♦ **New tourist attractions:** Dalian Forest Park, Dalian Xinghai Exhibition Centre, and the nine islets of Changhai County.
- ♦ **Festivals and Fairs:**
 - Dalian International Clothes Festival: held in September every year.
 - Dalian Arts Festival: held every two years.
 - The Festival of Locust Trees: held around May 20 every year.
 - Dalian Export Commodities Fair: held once a year in summer.





CULTURES

Fengdu-the Ghost City



Photos by Xie Guanghui Article by Lang Yan

The proverb says that good will be rewarded with good, and evil with evil. No matter whether one is rich or poor, when one dies, one's soul passes by Fengdu, the legendary "Ghost City", to be tried by the King of Hell.

Reward or punishment today is based on what one did yesterday, and likewise what one does today affects tomorrow's reward or punishment.

Fervent believers, please enter the following way: From the boat, walk first to 'Hell Street' (Yinsi Jie). At the end of the street is a dark blue decorated archway, its middle filled by a green-faced, toothy ghost whose bloody tongue stretches far out. To its right and left are ox-headed and horse-faced demons whose eyes glaze with green light.

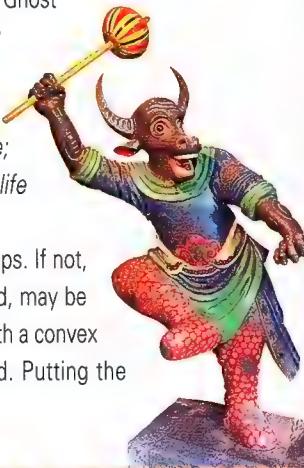
Along the street are Hell Restaurant, Hell Snacks, Hell Teahouse,

and more. Of course, they are not selling food for the devil, but famous Sichuan snacks. The word 'Hell' simply attracts attention, and lures visitors in to drink 'Granny Meng Tea' to relieve anxieties, worries and hatred, or to eat 'longevity cake' to prolong one's life.

From Hell Street, visitors can then go up to the 'Ghost City' by a cable car. At the entrance of the Heavenly King's Hall is a couplet in the calligraphy of the famous Monk Hai Ming, which reads:

*Everybody, no matter what class, must pass by here;
Rich and poor alike seek insight to understand this life
and the next.*

One must go over the Naihe Bridge in three steps. If not, reincarnation, and thus re-entry to the human world, may be denied. Next to the Grand Hall is a large iron anvil with a convex top, with a 150-kilogram semi-circular iron mound. Putting the



mound steadily on the iron anvil is said to be a test of men's faithfulness.

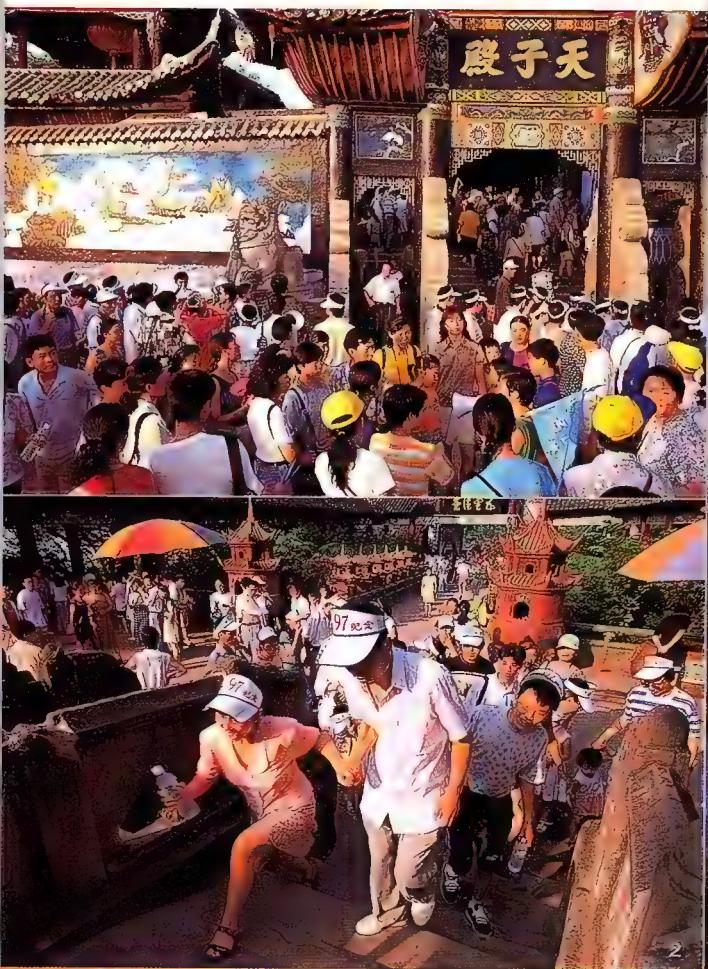
To buy a pass to "Hell" issued by the Government of Hell, one can follow the long and gloomy road of death to the Hall of the King of Hell, said to be where justice in the world of the dead is administered. The Black and White Wuchang (Messengers of Death) stand by the doorway — their eyes glaring frighteningly.... Evil-doers are sent to the Eighteenth Hell on either side of the hall to receive various sorts of torture. One is cut right off at the waist, and blood oozes out from the wound; a second one has been thrown on a mountain of knives, several of which pierce through the body; a third one is thrown into a big pot of boiling oil. After sufficient torture, they are brought to the Home-Watching Pavilion to have one last look at their homes, before going through the point of no return at the Ghost Pass.

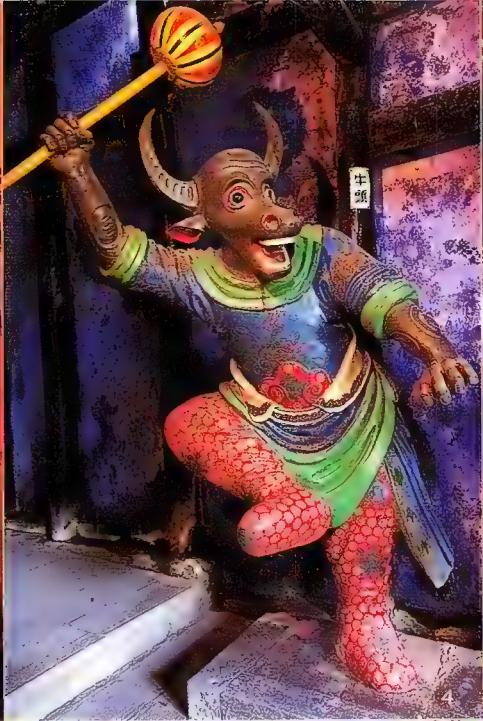
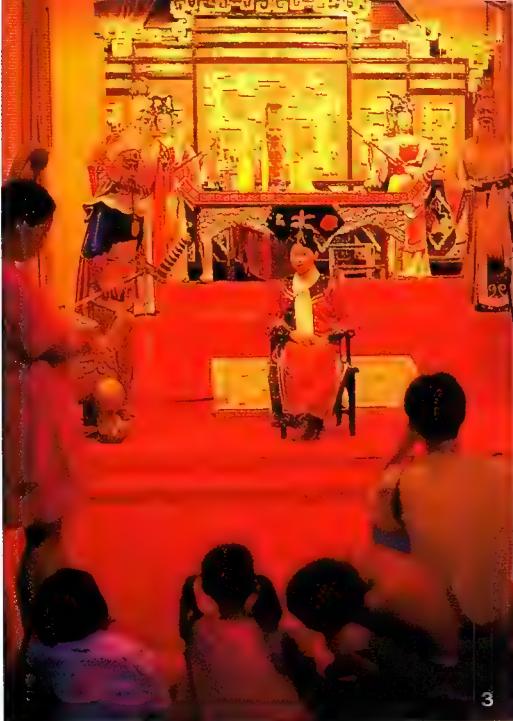
A visit to the Statue of the King of Ghosts is next. His four limbs are either stretched or bent. The ghosts of happiness, anger, grief and joy are raised by his left arm while unrepentant evil-doers are suppressed under it; caught in his hands are monsters and demons of every description and trampled under his feet are fierce evil-doing animals. Moreover, the King of Ghosts has a strange long tail resembling that of either a dragon or a boa, enhancing his mystery. His two big ears are shaped like heads of a modern man and woman, indicating that ghosts can hear what people say. Don't be too afraid of the King of Ghosts' mercilessness,

though, over his head stands the compassionate Goddess of Mercy.

Atheists can follow another route into the Ghost

City: First, look up from the boat on the Yangtse River at the city of Fengdu, the capital in the Eastern Zhou Dynasty in the Kingdom of Baman over 3,000 years ago. The whole city appears as a legendary treasure bowl, with temples and pavilions hidden amidst the trees, resembling meticulously made petite works of sculpture. Get off the boat and walk along the secluded winding mountain trails among the green cypress and pine trees; admire the clouds floating amidst the sheer mountain peaks and the Yangtse flowing underfoot like a gigantic silk belt. It is no wonder that Su Shi (Su Dongpo), a great man of letters in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), wrote the following poem: *Travelling amidst the quietude of Fengdu, the ancient city of mountains, I feel myself atop the clouds.*





Previous page:
1. A peddler hawking
souvenirs in front of the
Ghost City's archway
2. A life-like sculpture in the
Ghost City

1. The Three Gorges project has stimulated tourism in Fengdu.
2. Walking over the Naihe Bridge
3. Posing for a photo in the Waxworks Museum of Fengdu
4. The ugly ox-headed and horse-faced demon only catches crafty, evil people.
5. Flying dragon coming down from heaven
6. Ghosts on night duty
7. Entering the Hall of the King of Hell



鬼國迷陣

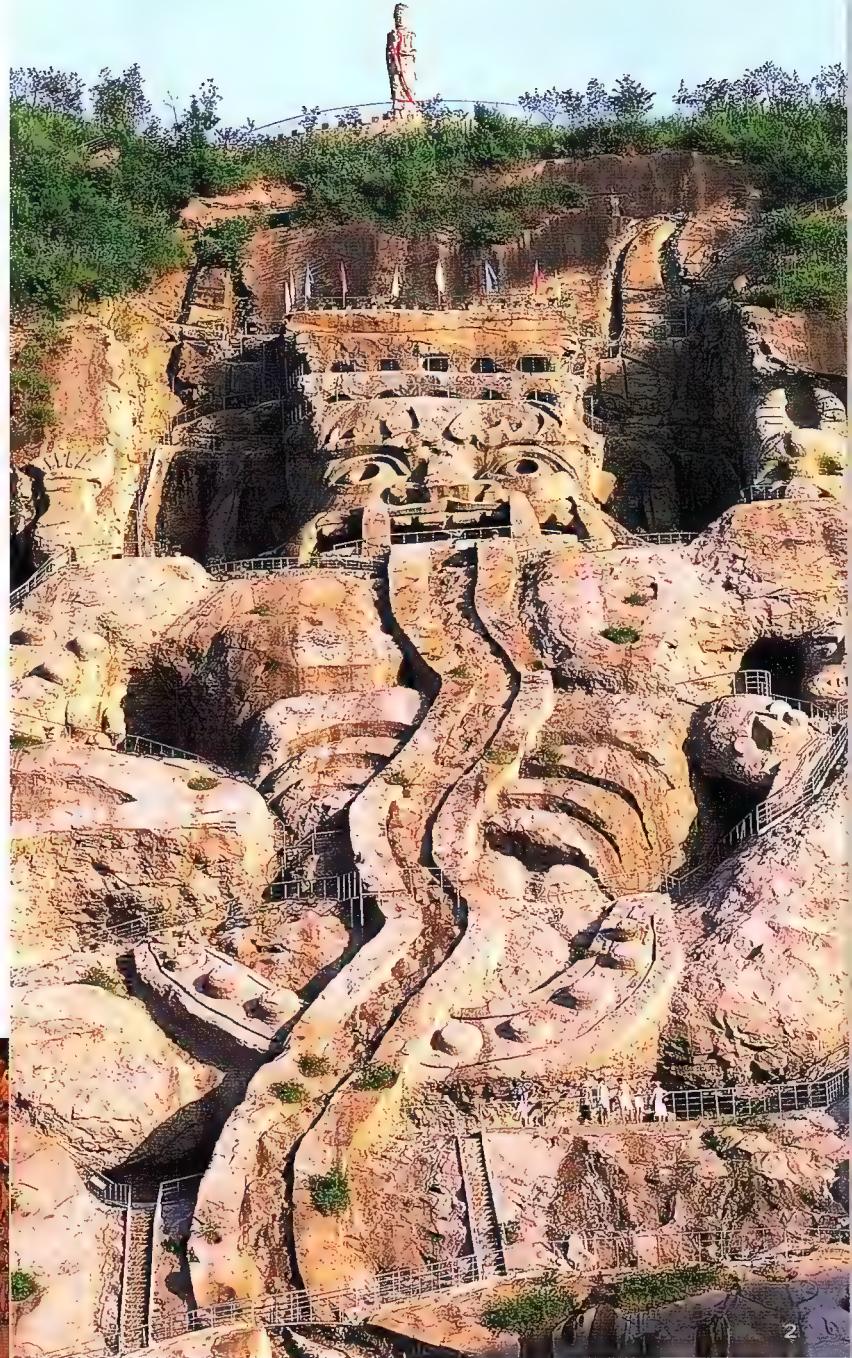
鬼國迷陣

*Raising my eyes and looking around, heaven is spacious and wide,
It seems I can reach the sun, the moon and the stars as I like.*

Climbing up to the top of the mountain, one reaches the Heavenly King's Hall, a building with magnificent carved beams and painted rafters as well as glazed bricks and tiles. From here, visitors have to go over the Naihe Bridge over clear, calm water and pass a green, luxuriant lawn. Along this "road to hell" there are row upon row of the buildings of hell. All have painted rafters and upturned eaves, in rich and unique colours, generating an atmosphere of oriental mystery.

This leads into the Statue of the King of Ghosts. This largest stone sculpture work in the world is 138 metres high, 217 metres wide and 26 metres deep. Its 20-metre wide mouth allows people to go in and out freely. Forsaking traditional round and smooth sculptural styles indicating delicacy, but the King of Ghosts has an extremely rugged and fierce appearance. Moreover, unlike most other cliff sculpture works off limits to tourists' touch, this King of Ghosts is unique — his hands, feet, head and even his eyeballs can be climbed on.

Whether a believer or an atheist, it helps to know something about Fengdu's history. According to legend, Wang Fangping, an official in the court of Western Han, and Yin Changsheng, great grandfather of a concubine of Emperor Hedi of Eastern Han, practised asceticism and became immortals in Pingdu Mountain and the opposite Qingniu Mountain respectively. Following in Wang and Yin's steps, many lay Buddhists and Taoists came to the mountains. Over time, the two surnames, Yin and Wang, were put together to become 'Yinwang' (meaning King of Hell); the city of Fengdu, where



both Wang and Yin stayed, naturally turned into the 'Capital of Ghosts'. Fengdu's reputation as the city of ghosts spread far and wide, and many Buddhist and Taoist structures were built throughout the city, simply according to people's imagination of hell, such as the Gate of Hell and Capital of Hell. The Heavenly King's Hall, also called the Temple of Two Immortals, was built on the orders of Wu Zetian (624-705), the Empress of Tang Dynasty based on the stories of Wang Fangping and Yin Changsheng recorded in Lives of Immortals. Ever since then, a mysterious and gruesome atmosphere has been pervading Fengdu. ☯



1. World of Ghosts — a new tourist spot in Fengdu
2. The Statue of the King of Ghosts
3. Grotesque and gaudy faces drawn on ladies
4. Buying souvenirs before leaving



We saw giant pandas and those who cared for them and saved them when we visited the "Hometown of the Giant Panda" in Sichuan Province.

The giant panda — a group of "warriors" from the Faunth Glacier period have survived disastrous environmental changes that started 2.4 million years ago. Many animals, including dinosaurs became extinct, but the humble and gentle giant pandas have miraculously endured into the present age.

However, as mankind continues their conquering of nature, felling trees and expanding into the pandas' natural habitat, the pandas retreated to higher altitudes. Their groups shrank and reproduction became more difficult. Natural calamities and diseases caused surprisingly quick decreases in their numbers. Fortunately, people have become aware of the pending tragedy of pandas: there are now only less than 1,000 giant pandas left in the world!

Natural protection areas and artificial breeding bases have been set up in Southwest China's Sichuan Province. With the help of so many of their "friends", the giant pandas may escape extinction and live side by side with human beings.



The Giant Panda

and Friends

Photos by Huang Yanhong, Pu Tao. Article by Huang Yanhong, Zhong Tai.



A Farmer Visited by Giant Pandas Eight Times

We had lunch at Yanjing Township. Although we did not eat much we heard many stories. One of them was about a farmer named Wang Anquan who was especially good to giant pandas. One day in April 1994, he received an unexpected "visitor" and then giant pandas came to his house seven more times. Every time, he offered them food, but the animals were very impolite guests and did not seem to appreciate the treat they had received. After they drank the beef soup, and ate the bones, they climbed onto his brick stove, breaking ladles and turning woks upside down.

We learned that the farmer lived in Kuaile (Joy) Gully and hurried to visit him. Unfortunately his neighbour informed us he was away.

A Surprise Guest

Another story is about a villager, Liu Zhongming of Yanjing Township. One day, Liu was planting peas when he suddenly saw a black and white creature moving in the woods. As he realised it must be a giant panda, he rushed home to tell his wife and daughter. The family was overjoyed but also worried. Where would the animal go? Why was it here?

On the second day morning, when Mrs. Liu was starting to prepare

breakfast in the kitchen, she opened the door and was surprised to see a young giant panda sitting on their brick stove. Delighted, she called her husband, who identified it as the same one he saw the day before.

This sudden visitor was a male panda about eight months old. The couple guessed that perhaps he had walked off accidentally from his mother. The baby panda must have been very hungry because he was so busily eating the leftovers in the wok that he did not even notice the couple's entrance.

The Lius decided to take care of their guest before they could find out what they should do next. But they did not forget to invite the photographer Pu Tao who was visiting the village to come and take a photo of them with their lovely visitor.

熊貓區分佈簡圖
Map of Panda Distribution



Left: Having a nap on the forks of a tree trunk (by Huang Yanhong)
Upper: Panda An'an enjoying a meal offered by the Lius (by Pu Tao)



Baoxing County, at the foot of Mount Jiajin in western Sichuan, is an area of high mountains, dense forests and sparse population. It was here that giant pandas were first discovered.

An'an Reluctantly Leaves His "Family"

The couple prepared a feast for their guest — steamed bread and a pot of corn gruel with eggs. Their daughter also added some milk powder and sugar in the gruel. Watching the panda eat with great delight, the family thoughtfully named him An'an, meaning "safe", wishing he would grow up safely.

After having his meal, An'an played in the courtyard with the chickens and went to the nearby woods and slope to loll about in the sunshine. The Liu's home had become his own.

An'an spent a happy day with the Lius. On the following morning, Mr. Liu and his wife prepared another good breakfast as a farewell meal for the panda. Liu then put the panda into a basket and carried him into the woods about a kilometre away from his home. He put the basket down, but An'an did not want to come out. It seemed he was reluctant to leave Liu.

So Liu went deeper into the woods and pulled the panda out of the basket. Caressing him tenderly, Liu then patted An'an on the bottom, motioning for him to go. This time, An'an seemed to understand. He walked away into the woods with a very determined stride.

Looking for Pandas in the Wild

Qiaoqi is a Tibetan Township in a remote part of Baoxing County, where giant pandas are quite often seen by local people. We came here in hopes of having the same luck. On the first day we went to Niba Gully and saw nothing because all the trees had been cut down. On the second day, we tried

Mount Jiajin but found no pandas either.

On the fifth day, the township head, Mr. Zhang volunteered to be our guide into Gari Gully. As soon as we entered the gully we felt that at least the environment was promising with trees and arrow bamboo growing densely and streams gurgling by. We did not dare speak aloud for fear of scaring the giant pandas away.

About two hours later, we suddenly heard sounds coming from the bamboo grove. Delighted initially, we became disappointed as we saw it was only a horse. On the grassland we found an old man, Mr. Mu, tending his sheep. This old herdsman told us stories about seeing pandas several times, stimulating our zest even higher. He said that it was fairly easy to attract them — just burn some bones and the aroma will attract them. But, of course, other wild animals may also turn up for the feast.

We knew that none of us could deal with a situation involving wild animals so we had to just keep on looking elsewhere. Suddenly Mr. Zhang quickened his pace and started to run as he said, "Panda."

After I had run wildly over a hundred metres and finally caught up, I saw no panda at all. "As I climbed up the slope, a panda had just passed by and I quickly took a picture of him," one of the photographers eagerly described his experience. Mr. Zhang, who

had been smiling while listening, told us late arrivals that the panda they had seen was not a giant panda we had been looking for but actually a lesser panda, a golden racoon-like relative



belonging to a different category.

Finally, a Giant Panda

Dengchi Gully is an unusual and mysterious place. In 1839 a French missionary built a Catholic church in this remote mountainous area. In 1869 the fourth missionary Father David announced his discovery of the giant panda to the world.

From Yanjing Township we walked to the foot of the mountain and started our climb up. We finally saw the church which resembled a simple farm house in the distance.

Our journey happened to coincide with a religious occasion — the eve of the Virgin Mary's ascent to Heaven. Many worshippers came from afar and they overflowed from the church into the Father's room, chatting, playing cards, watching TV, or reading the *Bible*.

The Father showed us great kindness and gave us what little bedding he could offer. With few beds available, I put up my hammock in the courtyard.

Swinging in my bed with the stars overhead, I felt as if I had reverted back to my childhood. After midnight, however, it was not so romantic. A cold wind arose and no matter how I arranged my bedding, I could hardly sleep. The hammock swung about so much that I very nearly fell out of it! In the early dawn an old man came and shoved me: "Do you want to take photos of a giant panda?" I could not believe my ears — we finally had the opportunity to see one!

After waking the others, I ran to the old man's courtyard where many people were watching. A giant panda lay in a bamboo grove; all around had been flattened. As it was too dark to focus I estimated the distance while mounting the flash and sneaking up close. The flash annoyed the panda and he stood up and walked towards us.

We all stepped back as the panda calmly walked past us and climbed onto a huge rock. We followed and climbed up from all four sides. Nearing the top, I peered up and saw I was very close — only half a metre — to the panda's head. He roared, and I retreated. I gave up any chance of taking photos.

Soon the panda came down, passed the bamboo grove and walked down the mountain backwards, slipsliding along and kicking up dust. He was indeed very wary of people who might follow him.



Villagers' Kindness to Pandas

We hurried back to the church where a solemn mass was held for a surprising 800 people. The 70-year-old Father, wearing a white robe, was presiding over the mass.

After the mass, we returned to the home of the old man, named Han, who was also a faithful churchgoer. He talked about his religion and recited the Ten Commandments. It was quite out of my expectation that we would hear an illiterate old Chinese farmer talking about the different aspects of Western culture like that in a remote mountainous village.

Han's home was very simple with very little furniture. A few farm tools lay in one corner, and a big silver cross hung in the centre of the main wall.

Talking about the panda, the old man became quite animated. He said that most people in the area were very kind to the giant pandas and offered them food. But there were also others who hunted them. Han believed that was a crime and those doing so would go to the hell after death.

1. The church looks like a farmer's house. (by Huang Yanhong)
2. After playing outside for a while, An'an is now going home. (by Pu Tao)

3. A game between the panda and chickens (by Pu Tao)
4. One of the authors sleeping on a hammock in the church courtyard (by Huang Yanhong)
5. Mount Jiajin veiled in mist (by Huang Yanhong)



In 1983, the World Nature Foundation and Chinese Forestry Ministry jointly established the "China Research Centre for the Protection of Giant Pandas" in Wenchuan County, Sichuan, in Southwest China.



1

captive pandas in the world.

Among the scientific staff at Wolong, Mr. Huang Zhi was the youngest and, it seemed, the one with the worst luck. He got his job here after he graduated from college. On his first day with the centre, as he cleaned the enclosure, a panda called Yueyue opened an iron door and attacked him. Mr. Huang was bitten on the leg and fled into the courtyard, but Yueyue followed him. Huang finally escaped, seriously injured, and was hospitalised for a month; he finally recovered two months later.

Huang told me that he still fed Yueyue. "After the incident," he said, "Yueyue became very friendly." Huang blamed himself for not fastening the iron door well and for having underestimated the panda's intelligence.

Due to a lack of residents' dorms at the centre, Mr. Huang lived at the pen area. Every evening he had to look after the two baby pandas. As well, he had another job every night. Nearby, a two-year-old panda, Feifei, who was extremely clever, would turn on the water tap to take a shower before she went to bed. But she never turned the tap off. So, every night when Hung heard the sound of showering water, he knew it was Feifei's bath time, and he would wait until she finished.

One day on reaching the rearing pen in the early morning, I saw Feifei wandering around there. Nobody knew when or how the panda had opened the door. Having passed through a corridor, turned over a flower bed, Feifei was visiting other pandas, seemingly showing off her cleverness. Mr. Huang and others had to work very hard to get this intelligent and enterprising panda back to her "room". I wondered if it was a coincidence that all the pandas under Mr. Huang's care were so intelligent.

A Professor Devoted to Research of Panda Nutrition

Professor Zou Xingzhen has been teaching about wild animals at the Northeast Forestry University. He came to Sichuan repeatedly for research and seminars on giant pandas. This time he brought with him

A Panda Who Loves Tap Water Baths

Over the past 15 years, the number of pandas raised at the Wolong centre has increased from 10 to 30, the largest group of

a nutrition plan for pandas. When I met him, he was making buns for the pandas.

The cost of food and medical care for each panda is 30,000 yuan per year, Professor Zou told me. Pandas eat lots of bamboo, yet they also waste much. They usually eat only a small part and digest even less — only a little more than 10 percent. As the supply of bamboo in the area was diminishing, the professor came up with the idea to grind tender bamboo into powder, add some nutritious elements, and make it into buns. In this way, captive pandas could be healthier and at the same time, more importantly, save more bamboo for wild pandas.

The experiment was going on smoothly. Ximeng and five other pandas taking part in the experiment were divided into two groups — three were fed the new food, while the other three ate their regular bamboo. The professor had to collect the panda's dung, weigh them and do chemical analyses. As if they knew their own value, the pandas were finicky with their food. They did not easily accept Zou's buns. To entice them, the professor contemplated many things: to try raw or cooked bamboo powder, to add more salt or more sugar... He did whatever he could to make his buns nutritious and attractive to pandas. The professor always tasted the food himself when he tried something new.

"Feifei likes this bun, because I added sugar," chortled the excited professor, as if he were taking care of a dear grandchild.

A Young Man Who Plays with His 'Children'

At the pen of panda Guoguo, I met Mr. Zhang Bo and witnessed the intimacy between him and the panda. As Zhang entered, Guoguo immediately grabbed his leg. Zhang pushed the panda away and put down a plate of delicious food, indicating that he should eat first if he wanted to play.

Zhang Bo was the son of an old staff, Zhang Xianti. When he was very young — only five years old — he had followed his father to work at a panda observation station. They had climbed high mountains and lived in simple tents, and fortunately, seen wild pandas several times.

Two years ago, Zhang quit his job as a primary school teacher and came to work at Wolong. Seeing these lovely pandas again, he had the feeling of meeting old friends.

Mr. Zhang was both cheerful and agile in his job, as if he was teaching these young pandas like his students. Guoguo and Longlong, both one year old, although mischievous, were his favourite students. Zhang not only fed them, but also played with them as a kind of exercise for the animals. He also taught them to feel comfortable around humans.

After the meal Guoguo came back to Zhang again and imitated whatever he did — running around the pen, rolling down the slide, hanging from a bar, etc. Though the panda was always slower than his teacher, he never gave up and finally, stretching out his arm, he caught Zhang by the sweater.

The Chef who Makes Special Food for the Pandas

There were four senior staff members here, named Chen, Ren and two Zhangs. They worked in the mountains as lumberjacks in the 1960s, and then signed on with the panda protection centre after it was founded.

Chef Ren was the "Special Chef" for the pandas. It was not an easy job preparing and delivering fruits for the pandas several times a

day and cooking a dozen kilograms of buns daily. The bun recipe was adhered to strictly: bean flour, rice flour, corn flour, eggs and other nutritional ingredients. Steaming all the buns over the fire took four hours. "Yesterday we had an electricity blackout, so I had to wait till evening to steam the buns. It was only after 10 o'clock that I finished," Chef Ren lamented. Chef Ren would have preferred to spend his evenings at home since his wife was paralysed, his children were back in his hometown and he had to do all the house work himself.

1. When giant pandas drink, they always fill up to capacity. (by Pu Tao)
2. Despite the spaciousness of their pens, the inmates find the outside world more attractive.



Yingying Returns to Nature

Mr. Chen had been awarded several times for his work with the pandas. He showed me pictures of his travels with the pandas to several foreign countries during the past six months and told me how visitors there loved the giant pandas.

Research was ongoing on whether captive pandas could return to live in the natural environment. Specialists believed that they had to be trained in the wild. Five-year-old Yingying, one of the three pandas fed by Chen, was the only one of all pandas in the centre who had its own patch of natural field.

Yingying always answered Chen's call and sometimes came begging for food when hungry. As the door opened to the patch outside, Yingying mumbled, walked out, climbed up a slope and leaned against a rock. The panda ate bamboo while searching around for new food.

To encourage the panda to climb trees, Chen fastened pieces of bamboo on a tall pole, luring the panda up. I did not expect that a plump panda was a good tree-climber. Nimblly, Yingying went up, stopping and getting angry on seeing the bamboo was still out of reach. Once she had the bamboo in hand, she slid down and enjoyed her food slowly.

Mr. Zhang's Wounds

Almost all the workers in the centre had sustained injuries. Sometimes, a panda's friendly gesture would inadvertently hurt

someone, not to mention the occasions when the animals lash out in anger.

Mr. Zhang rolled up his trousers, showing the scars from Lele's bite on his leg. Talking about Lele, the fiercest panda at the centre, Mr. Zhang still trembled with fear. Once, during a fight, Lele bit into the front leg of another panda and just refused to let it go no matter how the workers tried to separate them. Later, when a wooden board was raised between the two fighting pandas, Lele showed incredible strength, and simply shattered the board into many pieces, like a Kungfu master.

Seven years ago when Zhang was cleaning the pen, Lele suddenly came up and bit into Zhang's leg for five minutes. Zhang hadn't recovered fully from the attack, even after being hospitalised for half a year. Not without a sense of relief, Zhang told me that Lele had been sent to Shanghai several years ago and now had developed a milder disposition.

A Panda Revisits Old Friends

Another Mr. Zhang, named Zhang Xianti, was a quiet and hard-working man. He had worked a long time at the "May 1st Shed", a panda observation station in the mountains. Yet Zhang never mentioned that he had suffered any hardships or loneliness; perhaps he had forgotten such things over the years.

Talking about contact with wild pandas, Zhang became lively and





told us how they located pandas by their dung, how they lured them in by barbecuing mutton, how they drugged them and put radio collars on their necks before sending them off, and how they located them through radio signals.

One episode left a deep impression on Zhang. One day, a panda visited the shed for some food. As Zhang fed the panda well, the animal came back several times, sometimes staying for the night and sleeping beside their tents. The creature had become so intimate with the people that Zhang and his colleagues all liked to caress him. Later, the centre took the panda in and then returned it to the wild again. Unexpectedly, a few months later, this panda travelled dozens of kilometres to revisit Zhang and others at the observation station — the "May 1st Shed".

Cutting Bamboo for Pandas for 14 Years

"I started cutting bamboo on April 18, 1984." The way that Mr. Chen remembered the exact date he began this job was impressive — he must have regarded it as something sacred.

Chen Guangfa, a 46-year-old former farmer, was hired by the centre to cut the bamboo pandas eat. Since pandas eat bamboo daily, he had to cut it every day no matter what the weather was. In winter he had to climb the ice- and snow-covered mountain. His hands were often frozen and cut. In the last dozen years, he had only requested leave once, a few months ago, to look after his sick wife. He took the time off, leaving his son to fill in for him then.

His wife had been hospitalised, and the charges had amounted to 5,000 yuan, equal to about one year's salary of Chen. Chen could not understand how it could have cost that much. Nevertheless, he had never asked. Even if there had been any problem, he dared not argue with the hospital.

On hearing that I wanted to go with him, he was very surprised,

but we soon set off pushing a flatbed cart. He wore an old suit and a faded army cap. Stuck in his belt was a curved chopper, which was the standard tool that mountain villagers always carried. I had heard that the bamboo had been steadily disappearing, so I asked Chen if he interceded in cases that he saw people steal the bamboo, but he replied he didn't dare, fearing revenge. I knew that was an honest remark.

We walked about four kilometres, then Chen stopped and said, "It's raining now. Let's choose an easier path." There was actually no path at all, only grass growing among stones, all very slippery. It was two steps forward and one backwards, so Chen cut a bamboo walking stick for me with his chopper.

When we finally arrived at the arrow bamboo grove, I sat on a rock panting while Chen cut bamboo. He came and went frequently, loading up the cart. I also tried to cut the bamboo but found it was not as easy as it looked. Chopping too lightly, the bamboo didn't break at all; chopping too hard, the curved chopper bounced around nearly hitting my leg.

Chen bound up the huge pile of bamboo weighing about 100 kilograms. As he pulled the cart, I took photos from behind. The path had become even more slippery and carelessly, I fell and slid down the muddy road, as if on a children's slide. As Chen heard the noise and looked back, he found me sitting on his pile of bamboo.

1. Tourists posing for a photo with the giant panda (by Huang Yanhong)
2. Zhang Bo playing with Guoguo (by Huang Yanhong)
3. A mother panda and her baby (by Huang Yanhong)
4. The Giant Panda Research Centre situated on the banks of Pitiao River (by Huang Yanhong)



A giant panda breeding base located in the northern suburbs of Chengdu covers an area of over 100 hectares, creating a paradise for pandas.

Devoted Caretaker

It seemed like a miracle to have a large giant panda garden in a busy provincial capital such as Chengdu. Stone houses and courtyards were shaded by green bamboo. Two dozen giant pandas lived here. Some had come from the forests, rescued from disasters or saved from hunters, and others were bred at the base by researchers using genetic engineering, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and so on.

Mr. Li, the director of the base, explained about their operations, but since he looked like he had not had enough sleep, I gave up my plan to interview him; instead, I went into the giant pandas' maternity rooms.

Zuo Hong, a staff in the base, weighed 80 grams of minced apple, added 100 grams of milk, egg and sugar, and put it on a plate. She went into the panda's room. Yaya, the panda mother, was sitting in a corner holding her baby, uninterested in the food. Zuo Hong dipped a chopstick in the food and put it into the panda's mouth. Only then did Yaya grab the plate. "This is the only way to take away her baby;

otherwise she will attack you. Giant pandas love their babies more than

humans do," Zuo Hong told me as she took the baby panda out of the delivery room.

Zuo Hong, who started her care of giant pandas in 1977, has devoted more energy and time to the pandas than to her own child in the past 20 years. "My husband is also caring for animals and sometimes, both on night shifts, we brought our young daughter here for the night. My little girl suffered so much — mosquitoes, heat, and sometimes thunderstorms, and how the poor girl cried when she woke up at night and could not find her Mom!" Zuo Hong was on the verge of tears remembering the past.

'Grandmother' of Pandas

The baby panda was put in an incubator for premature babies set at 29°C. Holding the baby's head with one hand, Zuo Hong rubbed its anus with a medical cotton stick with the other hand. This was to stimulate defecation, she explained. "Everyday we do a medical check, observe its excreta, check its spirit, appetite, temperature and weight." Because Yaya did not produce enough milk, the baby was bottle fed.

The scale showed 1,374 grams — a 50-gram increase. Kissing the panda on the forehead, Zuo Hong then returned the baby to its mother Yaya, who had finished her delicious food and seemed to have become annoyed at the disappearance of her baby.

The baby was put down on a grass cushion and Yaya came over and picked up the baby in her mouth. She returned to a comfortable place and put the baby on her bosom. "We must observe mothers and babies 24 hours a day,





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in case the mother crushes the baby to death," Zuo Hong said as she pointed to Binbin in another delivery room. "Her baby was nearly crushed to death when it was only nine days old but fortunately we discovered this in time."

Director Li had told me that delivery room staff had not been able to go home for two months, and as he said so he gratefully joked that Zuo Hong and others were "Mothers of Pandas". On hearing his, Zuo Hong corrected him, "After being mothers for so many years, we should have become grandmothers of pandas."

A Noble Life for Two Pandas

Longlong and Jingjing are living a noble life, in a villa of unique style, surrounded by grassland planted with parasol trees and bushes. A few toys usually found in children's parks were also lying around.

In the morning, Mr. Luo "invited" them to breakfast. The three-year-old Longlong was the first to finish eating, licking the plate clean. After playing a while, they were given apples. It was then I noticed that pandas have a pseudo-thumb and so, can hold an apple like humans do. Longlong walked out, climbed up to a large tire, a swing specially made for the pandas. Grasping the chains, attempting to put on a show in front of the visitors, Longlong failed, but drew much laughter all the same. This annoyed the panda, who then tried another game but, again, rolled down onto the ground like a ball, bringing more laughter.

By about eleven o'clock, Longlong and Jingjing had each found a parasol tree, climbed up and dozed lazily on the tree forks. At two in the afternoon, when "tea break" came, workers cracked some bamboo to

awaken them. The pandas then came down and started eating their "snacks". It happened that the two of them grasped the same piece of bamboo from different ends, and neither would give way. Longlong pulled the hardest, and Jingjing fell to the ground. An adult panda eats over 10 kilograms of bamboo a day, but the worker said this was only a snack for the pandas at the centre.

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Tips for the Traveller

The Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Base is in the northern suburbs of Chengdu, which can be reached by taxi in 30 minutes.

Wolong Giant Panda Research Centre is 40 kilometres from Chengdu. Buses leave the West Gate Long-distance Bus Station of Chengdu in the morning; the fare is 20 yuan. The entry fee is five yuan per person; taking a photo with the panda, 10 yuan. The tourists can also join in the Giant Panda Club with an annual membership charge of US\$20.

Visitors are welcome to "foster" giant pandas at both centres. Benefactors can name their pandas and the money they contribute will be used for the expenses of their foster pandas.

It takes one and a half days to reach Qiaochi in Baoxing County by bus from the South Gate Long-distance Bus Station.

1. A baby panda drinking its milk (by Hung Yanhong)
2. Bathing a baby panda (by Huang Yanhong)
3. This baby panda has to be observed in an incubator. (by Huang Yanhong)
4. Nursing a sick giant panda day and night (by Hou Yimin)
5. Good news — it has gained 50 grams! (by Huang Yanhong)
6. Though appearing gentle and woeful, the giant panda descends from the age of dinosaurs.



Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

THE KINGDOM OF GIANT TREES

One of my secondary school teachers once raised a question: What happened to all the vast forests of the world? Later we learned about the destruction of forests during wars, natural calamities, and in the name of progress. Yet, all over China there are still extensive areas of primeval forests just waiting for exploration.





The "Kingdom of Giant Trees" situated in West Tianmu Mountain, west of Hangzhou is one such forest.

Our car spiralled up the mountain in the afternoon of a summer day. Groups of verdant vegetation greeted our eyes throughout the journey, but our feelings were yet to be stirred.

Upon reaching the mountain ridge, we turned westwards for a while, then stopped at the end of the road. After passing the fire-break we trekked deep into the forest. Surrounded by greenery, Mr. Wang, our guide, shouted suddenly. Quickly, I pushed aside the branches and vines to get a glimpse of the unusual scene. I was stunned: right in front of me stood a giant pine tree. Its incredibly-thick trunk made us all feel just how tiny we were in comparison. I looked up, wishing to catch a peek of the tree top, but found it disappeared among the clouds, leaving me with a sore neck. What a huge tree!

Many more "giants" appeared thereafter: some stood tall and upright beside the road, extending their branches towards the sky; some rose up prominently amidst the shorter species, exposing their upper parts to the sun; others clung onto the cliff with their branches stretching like parasols. Wang taught us how to differentiate them

as we walked on: golden larches' trunks are covered with scars like copper coins; Japanese cedars have long and narrow crevices in their trunks; ginkgo trees have tiny, round leaves...

Continuing our journey, we arrived at an open ground hidden deep inside the forest where an extremely huge cedar stood solitary at the east end. It was said that this tree is more than six metres in circumference, and is over a thousand years old. We joined hands to encircle it, and it took five of us to do so! No wonder it is called the "King of the Giant Trees".

As darkness came, we climbed up the stone staircase to our lodging, the Huanzhu Villa. With the fresh mountain air at an altitude of a thousand metres, we were soon fast asleep.

The forest enshrouded in the morning mist was even more fascinating. The trees looked more majestic in the extremely secluded thick forest. The luxuriant vines and moss, together with the ancient trees, displayed the unspeakable charm of a primeval forest.

When the sun finally rose and the mist was dispersed, the light of the sun further highlighted the splendour of the giant trees. Not just able to feast our eyes on these magnificent giants, but actually being surrounded by them was a moving experience.

The birds' singing offered audio enjoyment to our ears as well. The sweet voices of thrushes and the rhythmical tapping sound of woodpeckers accompanied by the gurgling river played a wonderful concerto.





On our way down the mountain, we found the trees standing on both sides of the path like soldiers lining up to see us off, whereas the densely-packed giant plants both nearby and far-away were like an audience gathering in the mountain. Taking a rest by the rocks, under the trees, or in a pavilion, wherever, we felt extremely relaxed and content. C

Translated by Jess Tang

Previous page, left: It takes five people to encircle the “King of the Giant Trees”.

Previous page, right: A pleasant walk in the forest

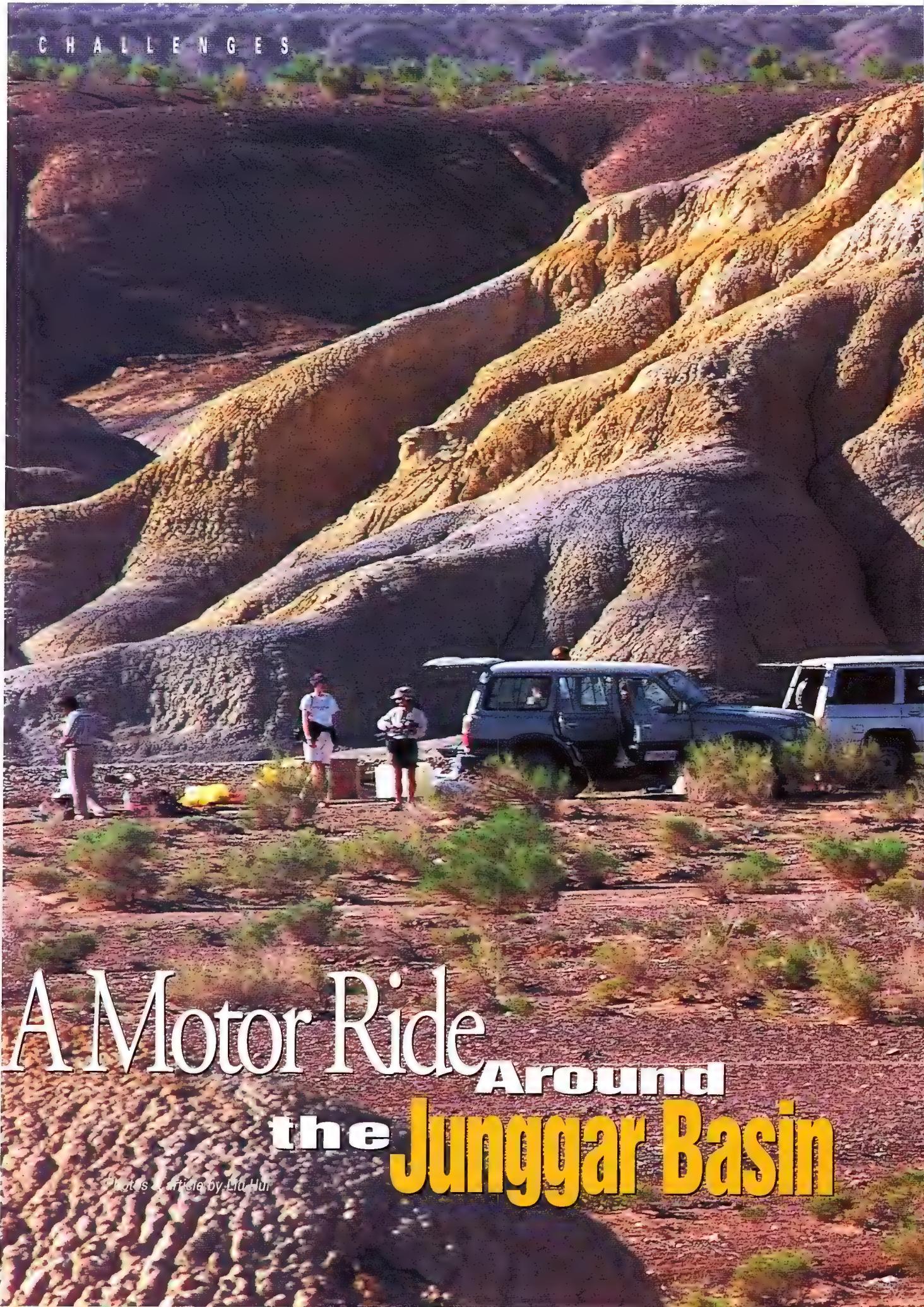
1. Even the pavilion roof is covered with plants.
2. A giant tree clinging on the cliff
3. This ginkgo's main trunk is surrounded by many subsidiary trunks, hence its name “numerous descendants”.
4. Mark the size of this huge tree trunk!
5. Let's have a break first!
6. The primeval forest in West Tianmu Mountain



TIPS FOR YOU TRAVELLER

- 1. Take a walk in the forest to feel the natural beauty and tranquility.
- 2. Bring a camera to capture the unique features of the trees and the surrounding landscape.
- 3. Wear comfortable walking shoes and clothing suitable for outdoor activities.
- 4. Stay hydrated and take breaks when needed.
- 5. Respect the natural environment and follow any local guidelines or rules.

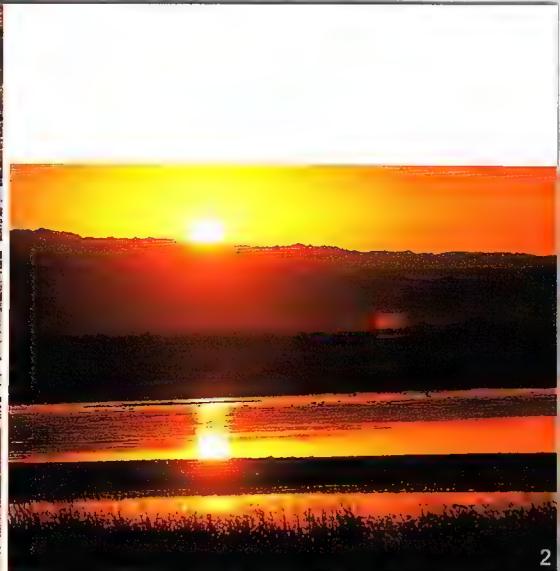
CHALLENGES



A Motor Ride Around the Junggar Basin

This article by Liu Hui





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Karamaili: More Wildlife than People

A Troublesome Jeep

On September 13, a fine autumn day, we borrowed a Beijing 2020S jeep. The owner assured us it was a fine vehicle for the roads here and, so, without much thought, together with four friends from Guangzhou, I set off at noon on a motor ride around the Junggar Basin, north of Ürümqi, in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

However, what happened shortly into our trip proved the jeep was not in such fine condition. At 3:30 p.m. and 69 kilometres into our journey, we stopped at the Fukang County seat to refuel ourselves and the jeep. Wang Sheng, our driver, then discovered that the electric wiring of the vehicle was out of order, the head and tail lights were missing, along with the front bumper, in addition to the oil leakage problem. Over an hour later, Wang had done all the repairs except for the oil leakage, so he brought along an additional can of oil. After stocking up with 20 nang cakes and more bottles of mineral water and fruit, we were on the road again.

Catching the Sunset at Wucai Bay

Across Fukang County, and 40 kilometres along an asphalt-surfaced highway we entered the Gurbantünggüt Desert. The sand dunes covered a vast expanse; some were stationary but the others were drifting, their surfaces overgrown with red willows, *Alhagi pseudalhagi* (a kind of desert shrub) and various other desert plants.

Having crossed one huge sand ridge after another, at 7:00 p.m. we turned off the highway and onto a 20-kilometre-long dirt road, kicking up a thickening tail of dust while hurriedly heading towards Wucai (Multi-Colour) Bay.

Situated in the southeastern part of Junggar Basin, this basin is actually a pre-historical lake-bed composed of layers of sedimentary rock in bright colours. Over an area of five square kilometres, the landscape is filled with cross sections of layers of sandstone of deep red, brown, yellow, and green. Years of erosion by wind and rain have carved this part of the world into a cluster of hills that combine to form what looks like a colourful castle city, known as the "City of Many Colours".

Racing against time, at about 8:00 p.m. with the sun on the brink of disappearing below the western horizon, we reached the centre of the colourful hills. We quickly climbed up one of the hills for a better view of the scene and Zhang, Yuan and I started clicking away with our handy 35-mm cameras. By the time Mu had rigged up his monstrous camera, the sun's rays had already faded, leaving him in a bad temper.

Following a mountain path behind the Multi-Colour Bay, we drove through the Huoshao Oil Field and reached its headquarters, where we stopped for the night.

Kamasite, a Veritable Wildlife Zoo

As day broke at about 6:30 a.m. the next day, the greyish blue sky was star-spangled, but without a trace of cloud in the sky; it promised to be a fine day. We shivered in the desert morning breeze as we left the oil field headquarters and hit a junction of three roads. The road running north was the widest with a signboard beside it reading: Gold Road. We knew we had reached State Highway 216.

About half an hour along the Gold Road our jeep came very close to knocking down a goitered gazelle that was speeding across the

highway. After it crossed it continued on its way nonchalantly, stopping now and then to turn to look at us, as if nothing had happened.

An hour later, as the first morning rays pierced the sky above the eastern horizon, we stopped by a small hill to watch. The orange-red rays vibrantly cast upon the ground sparked another round of excited photography.

By 9:00 a.m. we had arrived at Kamasite in the centre of the Karamaily Nature Reserve for Artiodactyls (hoofed mammals with even-number toes). What spread before our eyes was an endless track of pebbly grassland. Due to a dry spell earlier this year, the vegetation



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cover had withered. Grazing cattle and sheep mingled with hordes of goitred gazelles, Mongolian wild asses, and argalis (wild sheep). This mixing of domestic animals with wildlife is a rarity anywhere in the world and one of the reasons behind the good reputation of the Karamaily Nature Reserve. We had been told that we would see more wild animals than people at Karamaily, and it was true — in front of us were at least 100 wild beasts.

Shortly after we left the wildlife reserve our jeep broke down once again; the water tank had a leak. Since we were in the middle of nowhere, we had to make repairs with adhesive tape and fetch bottles of alkaline lake water for refills.

Coasting Back into Qiaku'ertu

We finally found our way to Qiaku'ertu by 1:00 p.m. It was a tiny town where wayfarers stopped over for food and a short rest. We sent our jeep to the town's only auto repair shop, where a Mr. Zhang spent an entire hour fixing the water tank and replacing its pipe, but he could not solve the oil leakage problem.

We refuelled and continued our journey towards Koktokay, but barely had we covered 20 kilometres when the new pipe broke and the tank drained. Wang Sheng hitchhiked back to Qiaku'ertu and returned with a new pipe. Our bad luck continued — there was a tear in the new



us he knew how to handle it. He immediately went into action, and we took advantage of the lull and headed for the Ulungur River for a photo session.

The Ulungur River, a major stream in the Junggar Basin that rises from the southern side of the Altay Mountains, has through the ages nurtured hundreds of thousands of people living in its valley.

On our return to the auto repair shop we saw a Uygur boy put fresh mutton into a plastic bag, tie it up with a long rope, and sink it into a well several dozen metres deep. We were told that in this way the mutton would be kept fresh for a fortnight. With no electricity in this area, wells come in handy as natural refrigerators. Our jeep was finally repaired, and grateful for Mr. Zhang's skills, we left the small town, and arrived at Koktokay County seat at 9:40 p.m.

pipe — and again we mended it with adhesive tape. Soon after we were on the road, strange noises coming from the engine discouraged us from continuing on. Remembering that the way back to Qiaku'ertu was only 20 kilometres and all downhill, we decided to return by letting our jeep coast down the slope.

We returned to Mr. Zhang's repair shop in late afternoon and found out that the jeep's cylinder tiles were burned out. Although there was no equipment in the shop to repair the cylinder, Mr. Zhang assured

Previous page: Tourists camping at Multi-Colour Bay

1. Startled goitred gazelles
2. The charming twilight
3. On the Karakungai Pastureland
4. Shooting the sunset at Multi-Colour Bay

Airsang River and Its Delicious Fish

An Airport Built on the Pastureland

On September 15, 6:30 a.m. as Koktokay County was still sleeping, we began a new day of laborious driving. Shortly we hit a dirt road which led to the Koktokay Mineral Zone. The road was bumpy, but the scenery along the way was captivating. The sun tossed soothing morning lights upon the mountains, and the glen was dreamlike under a pall of morning mist. We stopped to capture this charming landscape with our cameras. When we entered the Uqar Gully, the road narrowed considerably and its pebbled surface was even rougher.

After more than one hour struggling up this narrow path we reached the summit of a mountain and were delighted to discover another masterpiece of Mother Nature. In a ravine hemmed in between two mountains we saw a vast stretch of pastureland with a reed-swamped lake beside it, and cattle and sheep leisurely foraging in the meadows. This was a winter grazing ground for Koktokay County. In the middle of it was a rectangular clearance, which used to be an airport. When reserves of rare metal ores and precious stones were found here in the 1950s, numerous Soviet experts were dispatched to help build the Koktokay Mine. The airport was built for the weekly flights of personnel and supplies. In winter, aircraft were the only means of transportation there.



Following Lumberjacks' Advice

After we left Turgen we drove north along a highway at the bottom of a ravine. In a vale skirted on three sides by mountains we caught sight of the sparkling surface of an immense lake, resembling a giant emerald from the top of the mountain. This turned out to be the Haizikou Reservoir of Koktokay Town.

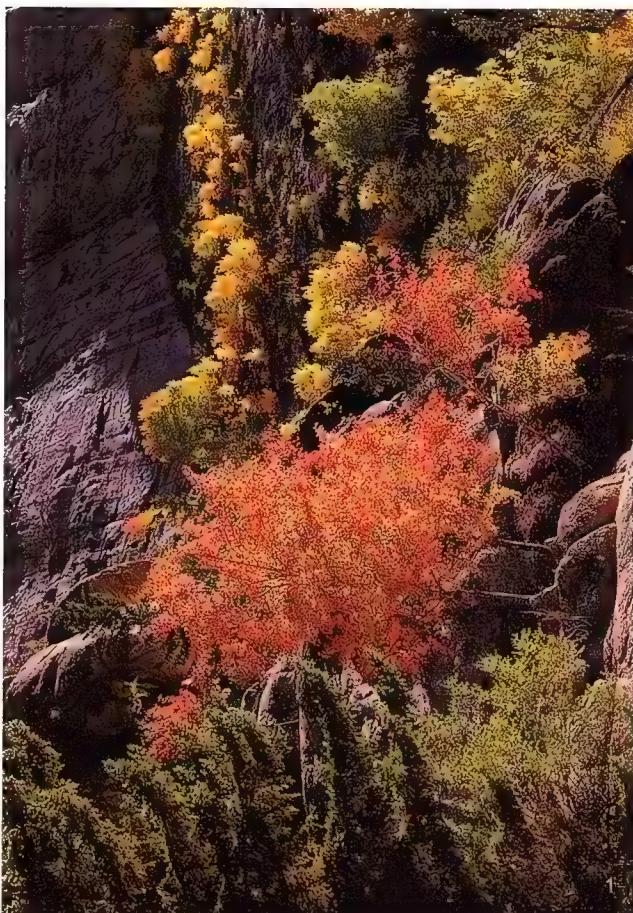
Upon learning that a drive to the Altay Mountains was backbreaking but the scenery along the way was gorgeous, we decided it was worth the risk. At the gas station, we waited for hours but failed to get our vehicle refuelled. We had no choice but to accept Wang Sheng's suggestion to "go on for a while with our can of gas in reserve".

At 5:00 p.m. we arrived at Akoba Village, where the pastureland was crowded with cattle and sheep and herdsmen returning from a day of grazing. By 7:00 p.m. we reached the tiny town of Kuwei. The lumberjacks in town, having learned of our interest in taking pictures, told us to go to the mountain on the opposite bank of the river, where they said we would have a bird's-eye view of the entire glen and the snow-mantled mountains surrounding it.

Following the lumberjacks' directions we drove across a big bridge and climbed up a spiralling and difficult road. Half way up the mountain, a scene of exceptional charm came into sight. The Kayierte River, lined on both shores with poplar and oak trees, looked like a green ribbon zigzagging through the bottom of the glen. It was not until dusk that we drove down the mountain back to Kuwei, where we checked into the guesthouse of a forest farm. In the dining room we were treated to tender mutton, a delicious local dish which was supposed to be eaten with one's fingers. Qin, the head of the forest farm, offered us a Yili-brewed liquor, which was very potent. Feeling its effects, we returned to our rooms and slept, oblivious of the wind roaring in the nearby mountains.

Chance Encounter with the Kazak Brothers

Awoken by the chilly wind that penetrated the windows of our rooms, we got up, and, acting on Qin's suggestion, drove along the Kayierte River in the direction of the Bagens River. The Kayierte, which





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locals call Airsang River, rises from the Altay Mountains on the Sino-Mongolian border as the headwater of the Ertix River.

Where the mountains opened into a gully we saw camel caravans ambling to another grazing ground and gold-mining ships operating in the middle of the river. More than 40 kilometres into the gully we saw tombs fashioned out of wood, which the Kazaks call "kamar"; these are a good sign of human habitation in the mountains. And lo and behold, with the tooting of our jeep's horn three curious young men emerged from their abode — a common type in Xinjiang built by digging a hole into the ground and covering it with a roof. Thus, the house lies half underground and half above. These warm-hearted chaps made tea and treated us to deep-fried cakes. This place was the Koktokay county government's summer office in charge of animal husbandry and fire prevention. After the other staff had departed, these three were left behind to look after the property. There was no electricity nor other amenities, and they lived on replenishments which came once a fortnight. In winter, isolated from the outside world by huge volumes of continuous snow, their supplies would thin out to only once a month.

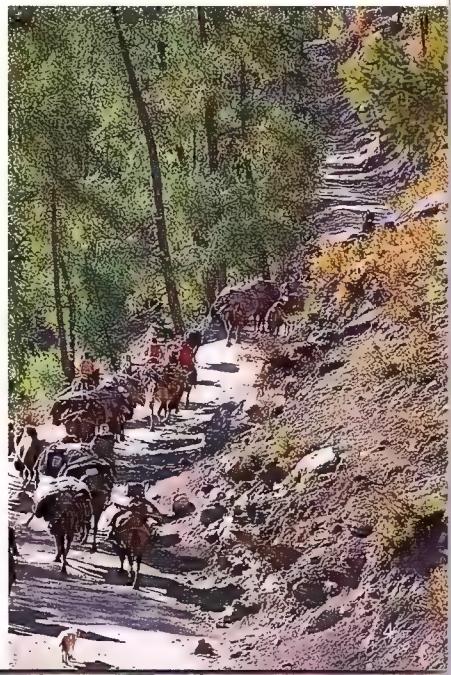
These Kazak men were delighted to have company. Before leaving we offered to pay for our meal and their hospitality, but this obviously offended them. So instead we left behind a few packs of cigarettes. As we drove off into the distance we could see the three of them standing on the mountain slope waving at us.

The Man Who Takes Care One-Sixth of Xinjiang's Forests

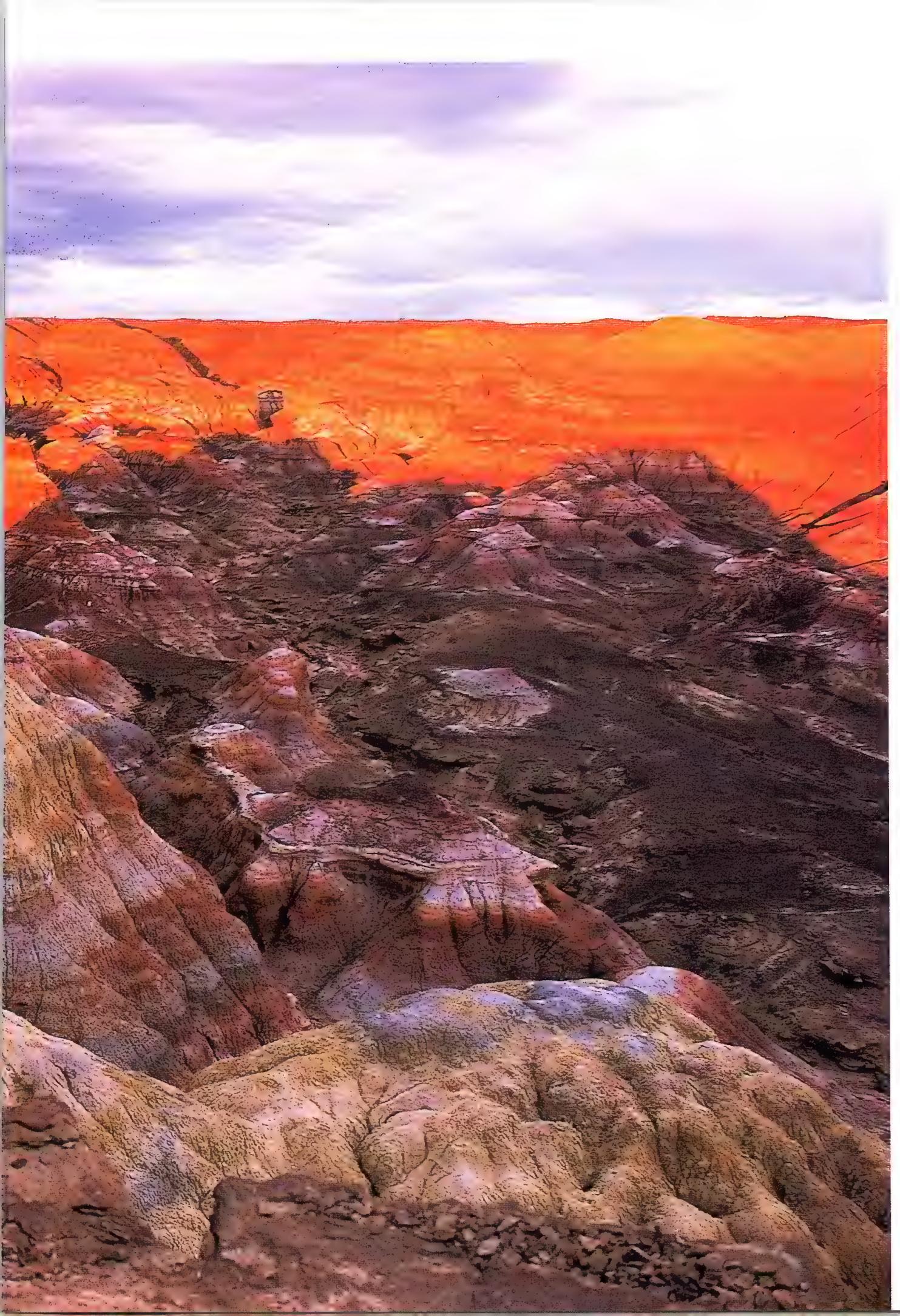
On our return to Kuwei, we realised that it was Mid-Autumn Festival, but there was not the slightest hint of festivity in this tiny town of a few families. In a Sichuan restaurant we ordered a generous meal for our own celebration. The restaurant owner contributed a few fish he had caught in the Airsang River which was unusually tender and delectable. The owner claimed the good flavour stemmed from the water in the river, which was mineral-rich and pollution-free.

The next morning, Qin, the head of the forest farm, took us on a tour of the farm's nursery. He informed us that Koktokay Forest Farm, covering 560,000 hectares, was the largest mountain forest in Xinjiang. And thus, this man was in fact in charge of one-sixth of all the forests of the autonomous region.

1. A gully dyed in gorgeous autumn colours
2. "Kamar", graves of the Kazaks
3. Women of a herdsman's family starting their day
4. Shifting to a winter pastureland









Sleeping Soundly Near the Mine Site

Double Mud Trouble

Leaving Kuwei, we crossed the Airsang River bridge and entered a narrow mountain vale on a road meandering its way through the depths of a trackless forest. All the time we dared not deviate from the route advised by the local people. The road teemed with boulders allowing us to cover only 10 kilometres in one hour. At a junction of three roads we made a right turn, but five kilometres along we knew it was a wrong decision. We turned back, heading for another gully and came upon a truck coming our way. Before we could celebrate our choice we learned from the truck driver that it was yet another wrong road.

A few more twists and turns, and we finally found the way. We sighed with relief, and then the jeep got stuck in the mud. We all disembarked to push, but no matter how we tried the jeep kept sinking. We scavenged for logs and stones on the slope, to lift the jeep and fill in the depression. It took us a while to shift the vehicle out of the quagmire. However, one misfortune usually leads to another. Before long we were caught in another muddy puddle, and another two hours were wasted before we salvaged our vehicle once again. Exhausted and hungry, we ate the few nang and a watermelon left in the jeep.

A Steep Drop to Bridge 304

As we were driving down a mountain with a steep gradient of 40 degrees at about 5:00 p.m., we felt the jeep was in a nose dive. A few days ago the rain had washed away all the soil from the trail and left only pebbles in its wake. Four or five kilometres down the mountain we could feel the drop in pressure on our eardrums. The whole situation made us nervous, but Wang Sheng, who was driving, showed unusual calm, cracking one joke after another to help us relax.



Worse still, some of the bridges were crumbling with age, and as we forced our way across them we ran the risk of tumbling into the river. By the time we reached Mica Mine No. 3, it was already past 7:00 p.m. The mine was in ruins. Only a small store existed by the side of the road, where some old workers and their children were chatting. They were surprised to learn that we had come across the river from Kuwei. There were no lodgings, so we drove on. The sun had set, and all was quiet in the gully. Soon night fell, and fortunately we saw a splattering of dim lights in the distance — gold mining ships still operating in the deep of the night. On arrival at Bridge 304, we were relieved to find a place to stop for the night.



Twisting Mountain Road

Without electricity we could not make out much of the scene save for the few earthen homes at one end of the bridge. There were only two tiny restaurants, one Chinese food, and the other Moslem. Pulling up in front of the Chinese restaurant, Wang Sheng forgot to put the hand brake on when he jumped out of the jeep. So it started sliding down the slope, knocking down a motorcycle, and was about to crash into the restaurant when a quick-witted Zhang jumped in and braked hard. The jeep came to a stop just two metres from the restaurant full of oblivious diners. That night, despite the noise of stones being unloaded in the nearby river valley we slept well.

The next morning we left Bridge 304 at 10:00 a.m. for a drive up Maizi Mountain along a road with 18 twists and turns. The engine became overheated quickly and we had to stop frequently to let the water tank cool down. An hour later we reached the top of the

mountain, where the road forked out in two directions, one to Beitun Town and the other to Altay. After some discussion we decided to cancel our plan to head directly for Altay and instead go to Beitun, because of the jeep's volatile condition. As a result of the drought, the road was covered with dust a dozen centimetres deep, and the jeep sailed through like a boat with a long tail of "water" behind it. Expecting a short road, but finding this one over 50 kilometres long, we crossed another bridge on the Ertix River, before we finally returned to State Highway 216. Only then did we relax.

Previous page: The Multi-Colour Bay at dusk

- 1. Having nang and water melon for lunch after rescuing their jeep from the quagmire**
- 2. The Burqin Pastureland — full of vitality**
- 3. A Kazak man waiting for a bus**
- 4. A drove of horses running down the mountain slopes like mounted troops**



In the Gobi Desert: Agate Stones Spread Everywhere

Karaterek at Dusk

We started out from Beitun at 4:00 p.m. for Burqin along Provincial Highway 314, which runs parallel with the Ertix River. It was 92 kilometres of pebbled road.

The trees on the shore of Ulungur Lake were dyed golden autumn colours, and so were the vast pastures surrounding the lake. White cranes and geese were frolicking on the lake, which, overgrown with reeds, resembled a jewel embedded in a golden tapestry. We wanted to sneak some pictures of these lovely birds, but they took flight and disappeared into the thick of the reed groves.

We arrived at Karaterek, where the Ertix River became a golden ribbon in the light of the setting sun. The water sparkled in the full glory of its colour, and the water fowl were singing and flying over the river.

In the twilight of the setting sun we left Karaterek. An hour or so later we reached Burqin, a tiny county seat where travellers bound for Kanas Lake stop for boarding and food.

The Way to Kanas Lake

Kanas Lake, covering an area of 2,500 square kilometres, is a well-protected nature reserve at the northernmost tip of Xinjiang, bordering China and Kazakhstan. Being the only part of the Southern Siberian flora and fauna zone in China, it is also known as the "Kingdom of Flora" and "Grand-View Garden of Wildlife in the High and Frigid Zone". The lake is only 155 kilometres from the Burqin County seat. Because of the fickle road and weather conditions, however, it has not been visited by many tourists.

After obtaining a travel permit at Burqin on September 19, we embarked at 10:00 a.m. on our journey towards Kanas Lake. Shortly after we passed Woyimoke Township, we saw swans resting on a nearby lake, which was rimmed by reed groves. As it was the migratory time of the year, we guessed this horde of swans must have arrived from Siberia on their way south. Instinctively we wanted some snapshots of the swans, but they were so alert that even before we got ready they had already taken off. We felt regret disturbing their peace and repose.



Continuing with our journey, we drove into a mountain valley. Suddenly a torrent of dust floated down the ravine, and before we had realised what was happening, huge flocks of sheep and horses — there were more than a hundred of them — rushed towards us like a storm. Not wanting to lose any photo opportunity, we pulled up by the side of the road and took one photograph after another.

Past a forest checkpoint at Harliutan, we hit upon a glorious stretch of smooth road. According to the road workers, the local authorities had invested more than 3 million yuan in renovating this 70-kilometre-long road from Harliutan to Kanas. Thus a natural barrier has been turned into a thoroughfare.

In the Burqin River Valley we kept clicking our cameras as we drove on, shooting the great bend of the river, oak tree groves, Moon Bay and tiny lakes. It was not until 8:00 p.m. that we arrived at the shores of Kanas Lake.

A Lake of Lost Beauty

At Kanas Lake we checked into the Bingfeng Inn, where I had stayed on a previous tour. The inn keeper, knowing a bit about the Cantonese diet, prepared rice and some special dishes, and treated us to a local brew.

A dry spell this year seemed to have robbed the scenery of its usual beauty. But, remembering past experiences, we hoped that there might be some rain the next day to make it different.

The next morning as we got up about 7:00 a.m., the sky was grey and lifeless. We went to the lake, but saw none of those wonderful reflections in the water, and, in fact, the lake surface had shrunk by 10-20 metres. The lakeside was so solid that local herdsmen rode on horseback to drive their herds to the water. The situation at the river estuary was even worse. The foamy and roaring spectacle of surging waves was gone, leaving only clusters of boulders protruding from the water's surface. At 4:00 p.m. we left Kanas Lake, severely disappointed, and hastened back to Burqin County.

Ghostly Castles

In the morning of September 21, we left Burqin for home. A little past 4:00 p.m. we arrived at the Ghost City in Urho. From a vantage point we looked down on something like a magnificent medieval city in which castles of different heights were laid out according to a





picturesque plan. As the wind rose, eerie whispers circulated throughout the area. The Ghost City is actually a stretch of land chiselled into a hundred and one fantastic, strange images by the cunning labour of rain and wind.

Since it was still early, we drove deep into the desert, which was strewn with agate gravel of different colours and shapes. We started to pick up the most wonderful pieces but soon we realised we had too many, and finally settled on a bag of a dozen or so kilograms of chosen stones.

As the sun slowly sank, we climbed up a high "castle" and waited for the right moment to catch spectacular photographs. While Wang Sheng caught some sleep, we finished off roll after roll of film. Then we had supper and refuelled our jeep at Urho.

At 9:00 p.m., we started back to Ürümqi, a journey of 400-kilometre-long drive of about eight or nine hours. The journey first took us along State Highway 217 to Karamay, then along the Hutubi-Karamay Highway to State Highway 312 which goes directly to Ürümqi. The farther south we went the colder we felt, until we had put on all our winter clothing. At 7:00 a.m. on September 22, after an exhausting, sleepless drive through the night, we finally returned in Ürümqi.

1. A pastureland by the Ertix River
2. Children of a herdsman's family gathering hay in autumn
3. The Ghost City in Urho



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KOREAN DISHES



I have always had the idea that ethnic Koreans distributed over Northeast China's Jilin, Heilongjiang and Liaoning Provinces must have eating habits similar to the local Han people there. Only after a journey to the Northeast did I discover that these Koreans possess a very distinctive culinary culture which combines peculiarities of both the northern and the southern Chinese: they prefer dog meat to mutton, rice to noodles, and then there is their local dish — kimchi...

When talking about Korean cuisine, it is impossible to omit kimchi, the famous Korean pickles, which is a must on the dining table of Korean people all year round. Cabbages, turnips, green onions, cucumbers, aubergines and rutabagas can all be ingredients of the sweet and sour pickles — an ideal appetiser. According to the Koreans

in the Northeast, wild vegetable kimchi is the most delicious and typical of all.

Probably because they are skilled cultivators of rice, the Koreans choose rice as their staple food, a rarity in northern China. "Rice in soup" is one of their rice dishes: a bowl of rice goes with a bowl of soup of soy sauce, cabbages, wild vegetables and slices of turnips; the spicy and sour flavour of this dish should stimulate one's appetite. Apart from rice, the Korean people also eat "cold noodles": dough made of rice and bean powder is used to make the noodles, which are then cooked and rinsed in cold water, and served together with gravy and soup. Cold noodles are eaten both in summer and winter because they keep one warm in winter, and whet one's appetite in summer.

Koreans are dog meat lovers too. Enjoying a dog-meat hot pot and a bowl of dog-meat soup, and then breaking out in a sweat is undoubtedly a wonderful experience! Besides, Korean meals are usually had together with three strongly flavoured accompaniments, namely red peppers, cigarettes and liquor.

During traditional festivals or wedding ceremonies, the Koreans spread their dining tables with various pastries made with rice flour to further enhance the cheerful atmosphere. ☐

Photos by Li Guangping Article by Lang Yan



Translated by Jess Tang



1. A table of Korean dishes
2. The dainty capsicums stuffed with rice
3. Making kimchi
4. Spicy!
5. What a spread for this couple celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary!



SHOPPING

MONGOLIAN METALWORK

Photos by Shan Xiaogang
Article by Bao Jiu

Why take the trouble to travel as far as Inner Mongolia to buy goldware, which is available everywhere? Love of art is the reason. Take the gold cast horse as an example. The very image of a horse may only remind the Hong Kong people of their favourite horse race at Happy Valley and the excitement of watching and betting on the race. But for Mongolians whose nomadic livelihood depends heavily on the animal, it means much more than that. They have a strong emotional attachment to and profound understanding of the animal. In fact, every posture and mood of the horse are closely observed by their masters.

For Mongolians, a horse embodies ebullience,

liveliness, innocence and determination. This explains why the images of horse cast in gold and silver produced in Inner Mongolia are so vivid and engrossing.

A visit to the workshop of the goldsmith's gives me a chance to see the whole process of making such fine pieces of work. Casting bronze in shape, galvanising in gold or silver, filigree, carving and engraving, inlaying precious stones and finally enamelling — all steps call for refined workmanship. Based on the traditional style handed down through generations, the craft has also absorbed the skills from other ethnic groups to enrich itself. The result is the fine works that vividly capture the spirits of the subjects depicted. A bronze cast of a galloping horse as shown here illustrates this best. Its well proportioned and powerful body stretches to its fullest and its

flying mane and tail show the high speed in which the horse lets

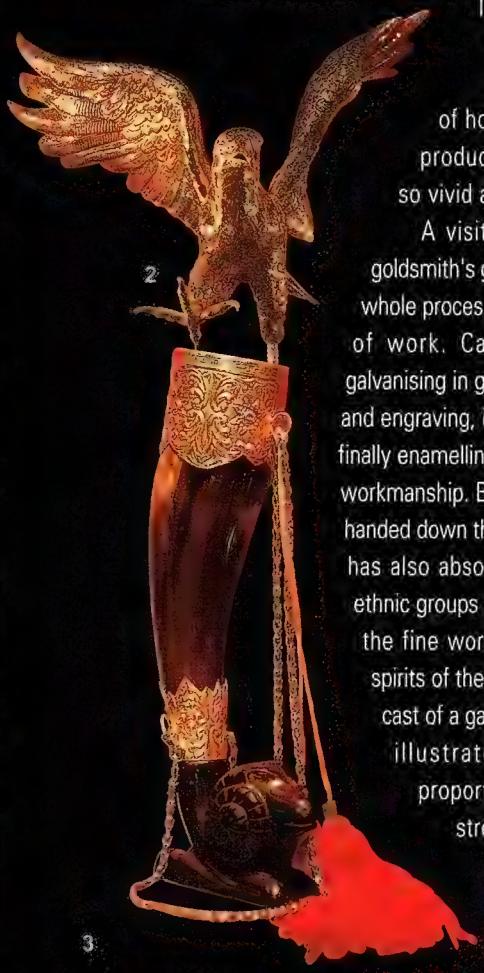


itself go on the vast Inner Mongolian pasturelands.

To bring all these traits of the horse to life, the goldsmith first casts out the shape of the horse's strapping body in bronze. Then the bronze cast is immersed into the molten silver or gold in sequence for galvanisation. When the "horse" emerges, its body glittering, it looks like it is descending from heaven. Next, filigree comes into play to give the work a sense of motion in the wind. In the final steps of enamelling and inlaying of precious stones, the "horse" is harnessed. Bridle, saddle, stirrups and reins are all meticulously made to give the now "domesticated horse" an elegant air.

Besides horses, other animals such as the ox, camel and eagle are also popular subjects. Tools and vessels such as sheathes and cups made from horns are also works of high artistic value. The works are on sale in the Arts and Crafts Store in Hohhot, capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. A galvanised bronze cast of horse or camel costs about 1,000 yuan while a cup made from a horn about 100 yuan.

Translated by Winston Yau



1. A galloping horse
2. A golden eagle fully stretching its wings
3. A cup made of horn partially encrusted with gold
4. The proud camel

ENCOUNTERS WITH A HOTEL OWNER IN ZHONGDIAN

Photos by Li Zhixiong Article by Hua Yu

There were 17 of us in the group travelling to Zhongdian, in Yunnan Province. From the bus, we rushed to the Yongsheng Hotel which is owned by a Mr. He, said to be the wealthiest person in Zhongdian. However, most rooms were taken, but the staff kindly squeezed in together to provide rooms for us all.

After a trip to Meili Mountain, we returned to the Yongsheng Hotel as it was getting dark. The hotel was buzzing with people in Tibetan clothes who were busy preparing for the arrival of a group of Holland. In the hotel computer room I ran into the proprietor and, before I had a chance to speak, he said to me: "Miss, how would you like to stay here as my assistant? You can take care of the computers and I'll provide you with the best possible conditions for you to develop your career."

"That's great!" I replied jokingly. Then, Old Li from our group came over with a package of corn. He told me earnestly: "The hotel owner's wife just now lured me over with this corn. She said she wanted to keep the girl in the red anorak to be her third daughter-in-law." All my travelling companions chimed in, making fun at my expense and, thereafter, Mr. He began to address me as "Daughter-in-law". He even promised me an engagement payment of 1.6 million yuan and guaranteed that his third son was a uniquely handsome man who would treat me well. From that day on everybody called me "Daughter-in-law".

With capital of 200 yuan, the hotel started out as a kiosk, selling small daily use articles. Then Mr. He acquired a teahouse where he picked up a lot of business information. In recent years, the fast developing tourism industry presented Zhongdian with new opportunities. He quickly opened the first hotel on the Diqing Highland for overseas visitors. Later, he invested several million yuan to upgrade facilities, including deluxe guest rooms, a ballroom, a bar, a bus fleet and tour guide services.

Speaking of his growing business, Mr. He recounted, "It was very difficult to start from scratch. We began by building the houses in winter and we carried stones from the river banks with a small wheel barrow in temperatures of -8°C. Now, the business is good, but there are also problems: when our foreign guests hug or kiss each other openly, my wife has to cover her face with both hands.

"To provide our guests with the best possible service," he continued, "I took some key staff to a dozen foreign countries and arranged for them to learn how to cook Western food and speak foreign languages. Now the hotel is well on its way to international standards."

When the conversation returned to the topic of "daughter-in-law", there was more laughter. While we were at Zhongdian, some local residents even said to me: "Miss, you and the He's third son really would make a good couple." The third son, I learned, did not have the courage to meet with the "wife-to-be".

When the time came for us to leave, Mr. He held my hand and said warmly: "Daughter-in-law, go back to Kunming and discuss the matter with your parents. I'll come and visit you soon."

Although I had several telephone conversations with Mr. He after I returned home, during which we continued with our light-hearted jokes, I never really believed what he had said when we left his place — until the day he came to visit me in Kunming.

"Daughter-in-law, come and pick me up. I'm at Anning." I heard his voice in the phone. I was speechless with surprise. I went to meet him along with Old Li.

We had a most friendly reunion when we met again. Then Mr. He said humorously, "Daughter-in-law, have you talked with your parents? Let me remind you, it is a Tibetan custom to snatch the girl chosen as a wife."

Old Li and I accompanied Mr. He to several scenic sites with animated conversations all the way. In the evening, Mr. He invited all 17 of us in the Zhongdian group to a karaoke party. He finally told us the reason for his visit.

"Hua Yu," he said to me, "you're special and I truly appreciate you, but I also want to maintain contact with people in the cultural fields. No matter what happens, I hope we remain friends." What could I say?

Bidding us goodbye, Mr. He waved and said: "I will come back. So will my third son." Once again, I was at a loss to know whether he was joking or if he had really meant it. But maybe one of these days, his third son and I will meet. Until then, my encounters on the Zhongdian trip will remain fond memories in my mind and in my heart.

Translated by F. Huang



The author and Mr. He, the hotel owner





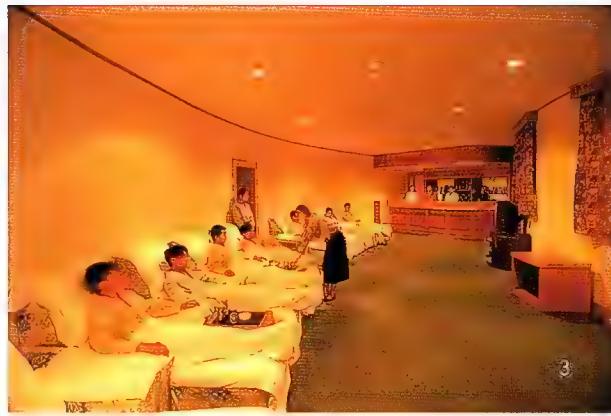
Xu Xiake:

When it comes to hot springs, southern Yunnan has the most... It would be a pity not to take a hot spring bath.

Theoretically, to travel is to go on holiday. But as a frequent traveller, I often find that travel is more tiring than office work. Even on holiday there are hassles, like hurrying to catch a plane, train, or bus, and finding a hotel at your destination. During my last trip, for example, over a hectic period of four days and three nights, I went from Hong Kong to Kunming in Yunnan Province, and visited the Stone Forest and Dianchi Lake. As tiredness set in, I decided on a quiet, relaxing last day of the trip.

Looking for comfort, I headed for the Anning Hot Springs Resort. I chose there particularly because I remembered that Xu Xiake, the famous Ming-dynasty geologist who wrote extensively about his travels, had said: "When it comes to hot springs, southern Yunnan has the most. And indeed, the water there is first class. On any visit there, it would surely be a pity not to take a hot spring bath."

It took about an hour to get to the hot springs tourist resort area from Kunming. The minute I got off the bus, I was transfixed by the beautiful scenery characterised with green hills and clear waters. Amidst the picturesque hills are a number of holiday hotels and inns in different architectural styles. There are both small ones, accommodating only about a dozen people, and large hotels furnished with all sorts of modern equipment. Though varying in size, all the hotels and inns are built into the hills and around the streams, providing a soothing environment. Intent on a quiet day, I chose to stay in a small mountain inn.



1. The hot springs in Anning is designated the "No.1 Hot Springs" in China.
2. Varying temperatures bath
3. The comfortable lounge of the sauna room
4. Everyone likes the Japanese bath.







The resort provides numerous bathing services, including the quick dip in extremely hot water for maintaining health, the whole body soak, the shower, and pulsating massage bath. Moreover, it also provides services such as sauna, Turkish bath, varying temperatures bath and Japanese bath. Following professional guidance, I tried the simple and natural Japanese bath.

The Japanese bath centre in the resort's largest hotel is truly unique. Many large wooden bathing tubs are placed in rows, each a one-person tub. In line with each person's specific needs, different medicinal herbs are added to the tubs. In still other tubs, milk, honey or fresh flower petals are added, enabling bathers to enjoy the ancient traditional skin care previously confined to the imperial courts.

While the attendant was busy preparing my personalised bath, I tried the pools of water with varying temperatures. First, a current of cool water swept over my body with tremendous force similar to a massage, making the muscles contract. Later, I moved to the pool at 25 °C and comfort returned. Then I moved to a third pool at 40 °C. The pulsating force of the massaging waters forced me to turn continuously; in no time, I was sweating all over, and yet I felt very comfortable.

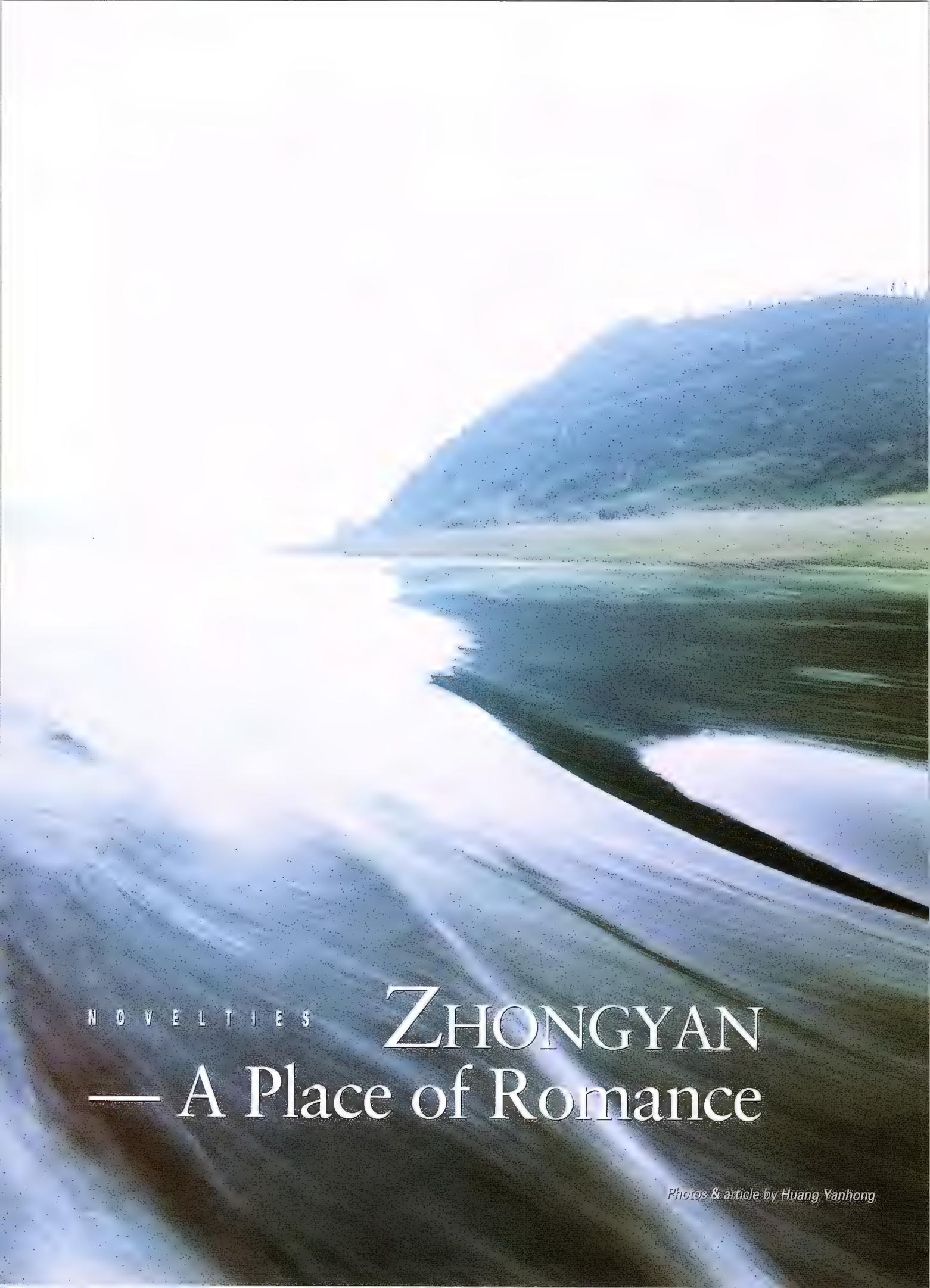
Finally my Japanese bath was ready and I jumped into the large wooden tub. The water

temperature was neither too hot nor too cool. I don't know whether it was the medicinal herbs taking effect, but I suddenly felt hot all over. My body relaxed and became languid and I dozed off in the tub. 



1. Water amusement facilities inside the resort
2. Chaoxi Villa, one of the holiday hotels
3. The luxurious lobby of the hotel
4. The private bathroom of the Hot Springs No.1 Hotel's deluxe suite
5. The deluxe suite of the Hot Springs No.1 Hotel

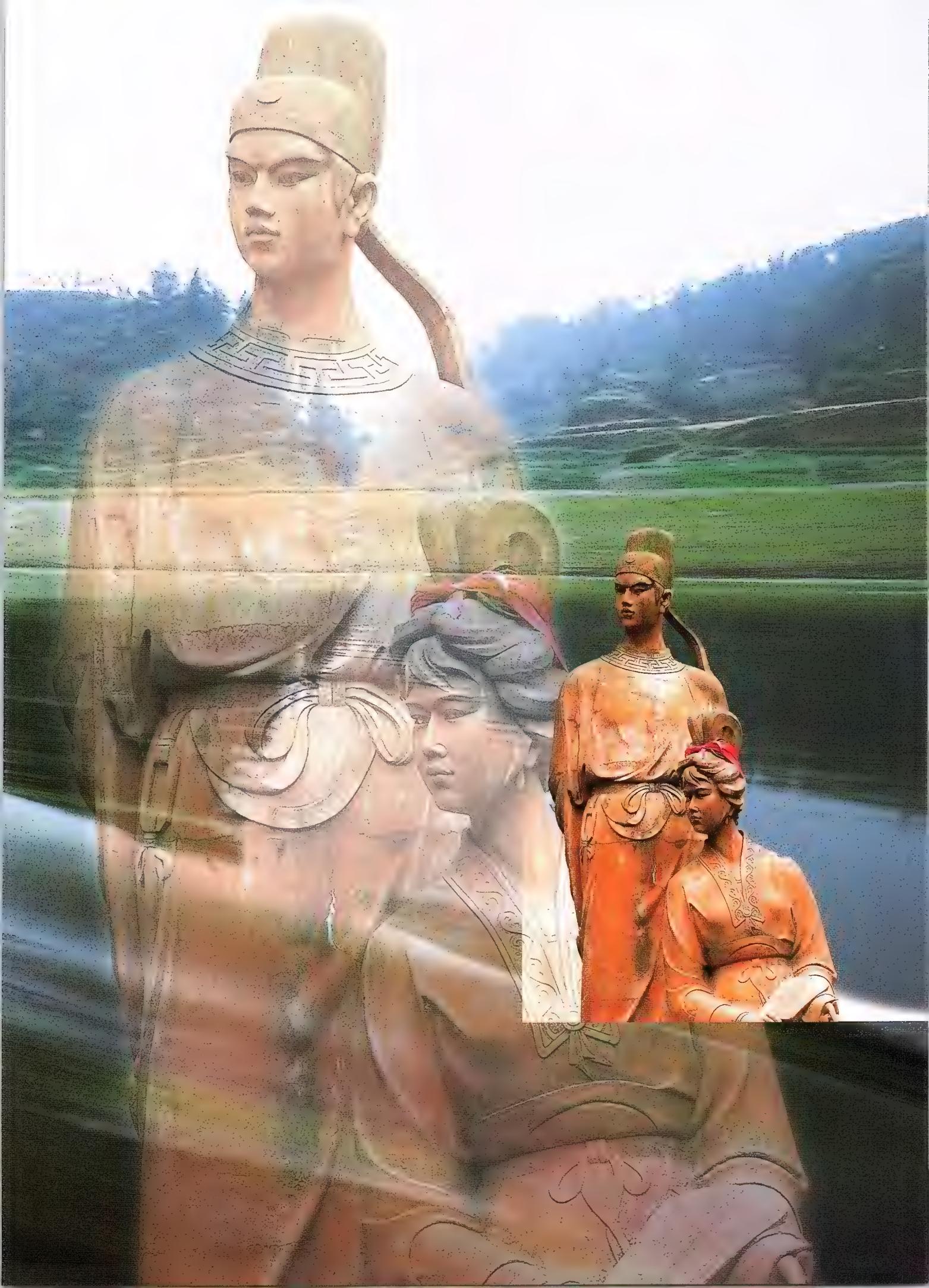
Translated by Li Zhenguo

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a misty, mountainous landscape. A winding path or riverbed cuts through the center of the frame, leading the eye towards a range of mountains in the distance. The foreground is shrouded in light blue mist.

NOVELTIES

ZHONGYAN — A Place of Romance

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong



Zhongyan is located on Cila Mountain by the Minjiang River in Sichuan Province. The scenic area consists of three parts along the contour of the mountain: Shangyan (Upper Rock), Zhongyan (Middle Rock) and Xiayan (Lower Rock), each having its own temples. Because the temples at Zhongyan are the largest, the scenic area as a whole is known as Zhongyan.

There are 15 scenic spots spread along a five-kilometre-long mountain path. Although the hills there are not high, the average elevation being only 80 metres, Zhongyan has a great number of Buddha images — there are 25,000 Buddha images carved on cliffs alone, not to mention those in the temples.

Zhongyan is a scenic spot of woods, springs and rocks. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581), the Fifth Arhat Nuojuna of the 16 Buddhist arhats, first chose here to live and preach, and thus turned this area into a Buddhist land. Worshippers and artisans came along over the following years to build temples, making

Su Dongpo, the ancient poet fond of beautiful scenery, is an attraction himself at this scenic spot

intricate carvings and sculptures of Buddhist images. Scholars and literary figures of various dynasties also came to admire the beautiful scenery, sipping tea while composing and reading their lines. Many of their calligraphy works have been preserved and have become an integral part of the attractions of Zhongyan.

One of them, Su Dongpo, the famous Song-dynasty poet, even fell in love with Wang Fu, a local girl here. It is for her that the great poet wrote the famous lines: "For 10 years, I have been cut off from news of you, even not knowing whether you are alive or dead. I try not to think about the days we were together, but how can I forget?"

Where Su Dongpo Found His First Love

On the rock by the Calling Fish Pond is its name written in the hand of Su Dongpo. Su travelled a lot and Zhongyan is one of the few lovely scenic spots which could have enticed this great poet to stay longer than usual.

The story goes that Su Dongpo rented a house to study at the Zhongyan Temple. He often came to sit by the pond at the foot of the mountain. One day, at a scholars' gathering, Su gave the name "Calling Fish Pond" to the pond and was applauded by the people present. It was a coincidence that Wang Fu, the daughter of the local teacher Wang Fang, also had named the pond "Calling Fish Pond". Wang Fang was very fond of the intelligent young man and willingly married his daughter to Su Dongpo.

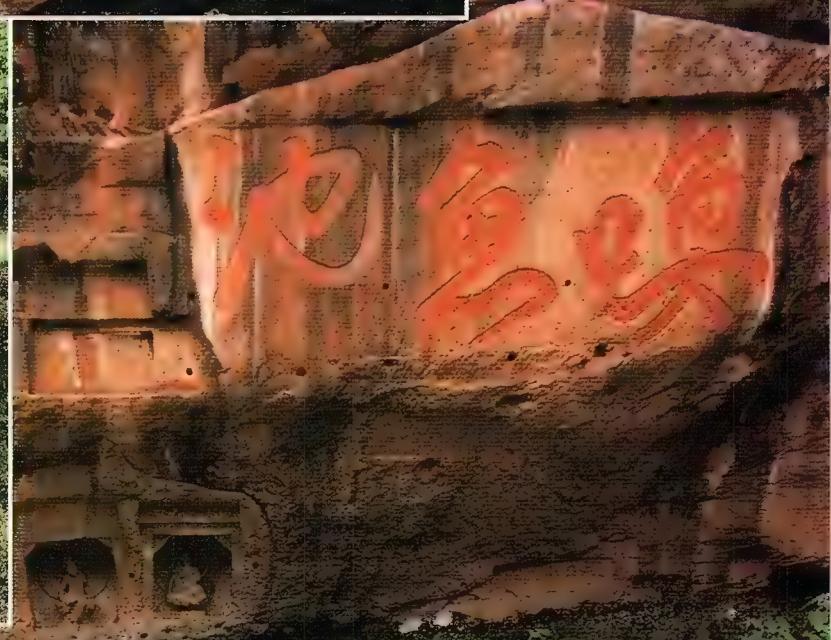
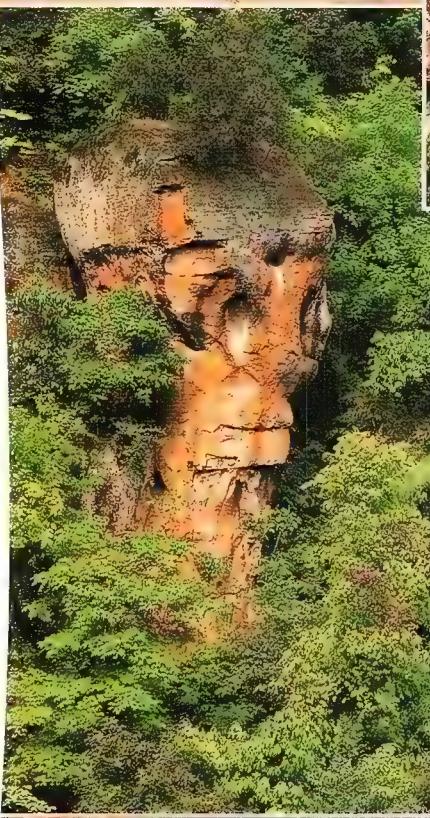
Besides Su Dongpo's calligraphy, there are many other carvings and inscriptions of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) left on the cliffs here. Among these are three Buddhist pillars with a sutra carved on them. A statue of Guanyin, or the Goddess of Mercy, in the image of a woman farmer carrying a basket is extremely vivid. Standing by the lake are the stone images of Su Dongpo and Wang Fu, which have been done by contemporary people in memory of their great love.

Stone Tiger

Going forward I saw a stone tiger. It is a huge stone in its natural shape, called "Maomao (Cat) Stone" by the locals.

Legend says that in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), there used to be two tiger stones here. When rumours spread

1. The Stone Tiger saved by Su Dongpo
2. The Monkey-Head Rock at Zhongyan
3. A Buddhist niche
4. The Goddess of Mercy dressed as a rural woman
5. The Thousand Buddha Cliff is a must for pilgrims.
6. A foundation stone at the ruins of the Zhongsi Temple
7. The Calling Fish Pond which ignited the love between Su Dongpo and Wang Fu



that a demon tiger hurt people at Zhongyan, some monks on the mountain believed that the stone tigers were the ones under suspicion. So they destroyed the one who was poised to come up the mountain. At the moment they were about to hit the other one Su Dongpo passed by and stopped them. This is how the present stone tiger was saved.

2,000 Buddhist Images

Passing by the stone tiger, I then came to the Receiving Pavilion. On the cliff is a large stone called Receiving Buddha, his left hand holding a string of beads and his right hand dropping to one side with the palm facing upwards. It is said that this is the standard posture the Buddha assumes for "delivering all living creatures from torment". After being "received" by the Buddha, I suddenly felt that the air had become solemn, and piously, I entered the Long Corridor of Thousand Buddhas.

Two thousand Buddha images in the extant 48 niches are found here. Most of Buddha images were carved in the Tang Dynasty, and many of them have been ruined or destroyed. Behind the Receiving Buddha are many Buddha images on the cliffs which stretch a few hundred metres long.

The Old Man and the Teahouse

A half-opened cave is the well-known "Jade Spring Crag". Approximately 20 metres wide and a dozen metres deep, it looks like a spacious house. Two stone dragons were carved on the wall, where water flowed out of the mouth of the upper one and collected by the mouth of the lower one. Most of the tourists cannot help going up the steps to drink the water from these dragons. Only a few paces away from the stone dragons was the Taiji Pond.

The area around Jade Spring Crag is quiet and peaceful. To create an atmosphere of ancient times for the tourists, a teahouse has been built there. A 90-year-old fortune teller comes to the teahouse everyday to drink tea and tell legends to the curious visitors.

Moving on from the Zhongsi Temple, I followed a group of old worshippers to Shangsi Temple. The surroundings of Shangsi Temple is really beautiful. Three peaks rise up like stone bamboo shoots, and the spectacular stone cliffs are full of carved inscriptions.

Further up is the Green Summit, from where one can have a bird's-eye view of the whole Zhongyan area. The summit is also an ideal place to watch the sunrise. Not far from the stone niche is the Dongpo Study, where Su Dongpo once stayed.



Translated by M. Q.

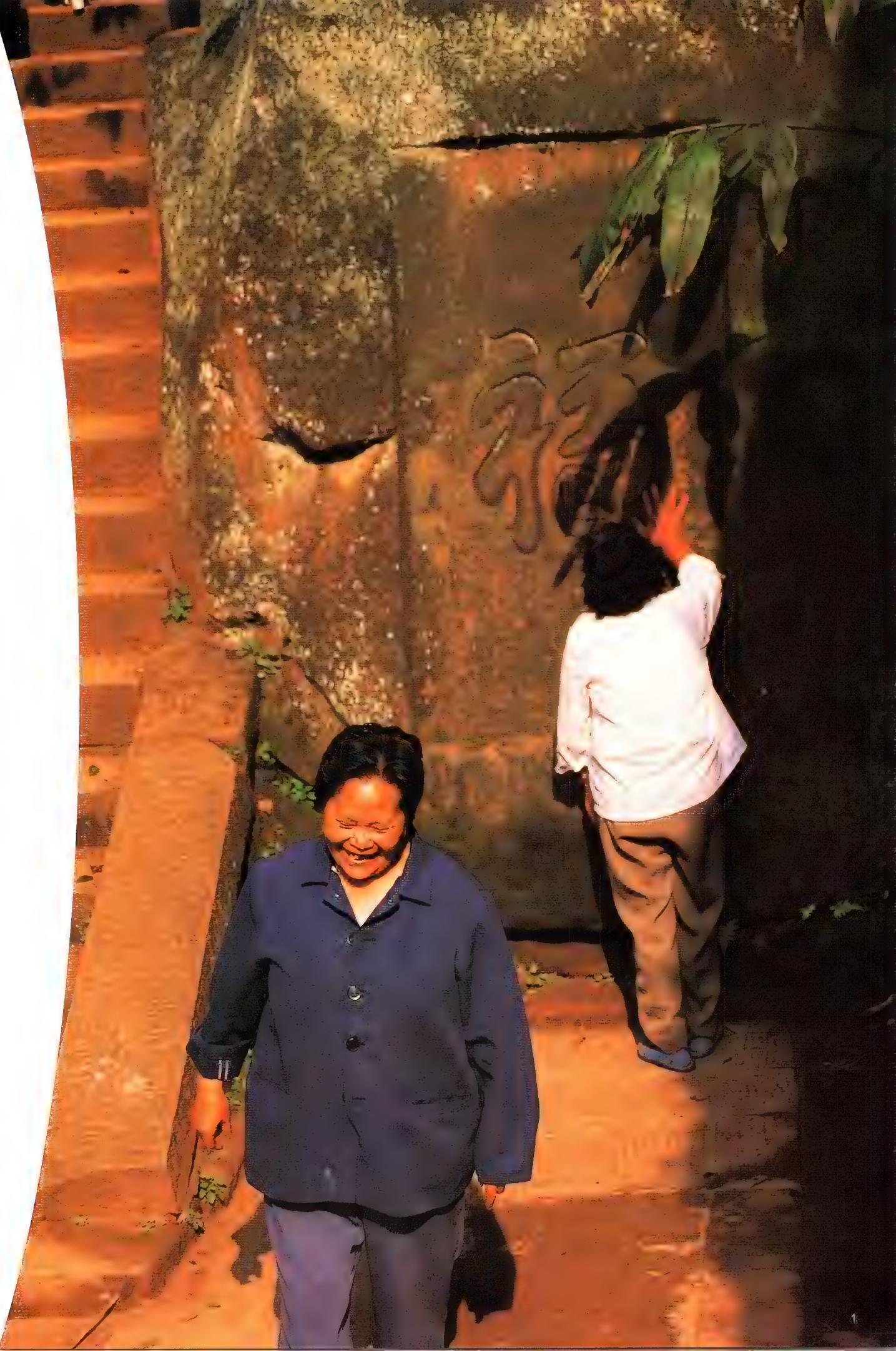
Tips for the Traveller

Zhongyan is located 123 kilometres to the south of Chengdu and 37 kilometres to the north of Leshan. You may take a long-distance bus from Chengdu to Qingshen, and then hire a taxi to Ruifeng Town, from where you take the ferry to the opposite bank of the river. You may also take a bus from Leshan to Qingshen.

On the way back from Zhongyan, most people take boat from Zhongyan down the river to enjoy the scenery along the Minjiang River, which is as beautiful as the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River and has been nicknamed the "Lesser Three Gorges of Pingqiang".

Eating and accommodation are extremely convenient at Zhongyan. The hotel room rate is less than 100 yuan per day, and it can even be as cheap as 20 yuan per bed. Food specialities include fish, bean-curd and ice, mountain vegetables and game meat dishes.

1. It is believed that by touching this character, "happiness", one's happiness can be guaranteed.



Tourism Among the Forests

Photos & article by Chan Yat Nin



If you think that all mountains in Guangxi are like those strange pinnacles found in Guilin, you are wrong. The province is also home to many lofty magnificent mountains.

Opening up a map of Guangxi, you will see many towering mountains at elevations over 1,000 metres above sea level and some even exceeding 2,000 metres in northern, central and southern Guangxi. The rolling mountains are all covered with dense primeval forests, brimming with rare plants, precious animals and vigorous waterfalls and streams. The region has retained its original natural features while at the same time gone through a period of development.

The rich natural resources of the forests and mountains have been developed into 11 state-grade and eight province-grade forest parks, including Bajiaozhai, Longsheng Hot Springs, Dayao Mountain Range at Jinxiu, Yuanbao Mountain at Rongshui, Gupo Mountain at Hezhou, Shiwan Mountain at Shangsi, Liangfeng River at Nanning, and the State Forest Park at Guilin. There are also some natural reserves like Longhu Mountain at Long'an, Daming Mountain at Wuming, Miao'er Mountain at Xing'an and Huaping at Longsheng.

Climbing Miao'er Mountain — the Roof of South China

If you want to ascend the supreme summit in Guangxi, the choice must be Miao'er Mountain, the highest peak in South China. Miao'er Mountain is one of the oldest mountains in Guangxi, and is formed of granite and metamorphic rocks. It is the main peak of Yuecheng Mountain Range, rising 2,142 metres above sea level and overlooking the whole Nanling Mountains. The mountain range runs from northeast to southwest for about 60 kilometres with a width of 10 to 15 kilometres.

Driving northwest for about two hours from Guilin, passing Jianghua Township of Xing'an County, you enter the Miao'er Mountain area. The twisting highway zigzags among pristine forests. Hemlock Park, at an elevation of 1,800 metres, is the first stop where everyone aims to see Chinese Hemlock, a rare specimen of tree that has survived through the Glacier Age, and is only found in China. It is regarded as a "living fossil". However, these ancient "reminders" have grown into a forest of 1,500 trees, standing like soldiers on slopes 1,600 to 1,900 metres high.



- 1.The rare white-headed monkey lives in the primeval forests of Guangxi. (by Xu Xinyao)
- 2.Flowers blossoming in a mountain forest
- 3.Vines entwining the trees in a virgin forest
- 4.A cable bridge over a deep valley in the Longsheng Hot Springs Forest Park — frightening and challenging

At Miao'er Mountain, the forest covers 27,000 hectares, of which 15,000 hectares are within the nature reserve. There are countless animal and plant specimens, some of which are rare and precious. Going up to the 2,100 metres point, you will find a television tower — a symbol that man has conquered nature on Miao'er Mountain. A further 42-metre climb will bring you to the top of the mountain. The summit is a bare granite rock soaring up above all other mountains. Looking around from the summit, you may see clouds floating among the mountain peaks. The nearby rugged peaks, such as Buddha Light Terrace, Celestial Pillar, and South China Tiger, all look like islets in a sea of clouds.

Zijiang-Bajiaozhai — A Landscaped Ribbon of Water

From Miao'er Mountain's natural reservoir of vast forests spring forth the Lijiang, Zijiang and Xunjiang rivers. With beautiful mountain peaks on its banks, the Zijiang River, which flows northwards and forms another well-known picturesque spot: the Zijiang-Bajiaozhai Scenic Area.

The Zijiang River could claim it is a sister river of the Lijiang River that passes through Guilin. Its clear water flows swiftly along a zigzag course, with many branching brooks. As the river winds its way through the valley hemmed in by cliffs on both



sides, the typical landscape of this region — glistening red rock — appears. A 22-kilometre-long route along the Zijiang River has become a popular tourist programme.

A boat tour starting from the No. 2 Dock of the Zijiang River will take you down this landscaped ribbon of water between steep cliffs. As the boatman pushes away from the bank with his

long bamboo oar, the boat drifts into the swift current, meeting shoals and rapids one after the other. Dense bamboo groves and flowering shrubs cover the ruddy hues of the rocky base in these rugged mountains, creating picturesque reflections in the water.

Many of the jagged shapes of the mountains have sparked people's imagination. Consequently, many crags along the route have been given names, such as Lion Welcoming Guests, Sail Stone, Big Belly Arhat, Wisdom Stone, Holy Elephant Drinking Water, General Guarding Heavenly Gate on Horse, and Celestial Villa.

The boat stops at Celestial Villa, where athletic visitors can





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get off and climb up to the top. It is a precipitous peak, with a plank road cut into the sheer cliffs all the way to the top. A picture-postcard scene of the Zijiang River winding through red, rocky mountains comes into view as you reach the summit.

The Bajiaozhai Scenic Area to the west of the river at its lower reaches has the most spectacular examples of the typical red rocky landscape. From the foot of Bajiaozhai, you can climb up to the precarious Dragon Ridge and from there, after an hour's walk along a mountain path, reach the top. The summit is 818 metres above sea level, and its shape resembles a dragon with eight "fins" protruding from its cliffs. Standing at one of Bajiaozhai's highest points, Dragon-Head Incense (Longtouxiang), a panoramic view of distant mountains blending with those nearby extends like continuous rough, rolling waves. Some of the "waves" resemble huge snails, hence their names — Snail Peaks.

Most of the peaks in Bajiaozhai Scenic Area rise up abruptly and dramatically from the valley. Strangely, many of them have flat tops. Thus, Bajiaozhai has its second name — Cloudy Terrace Mountain.

Qingbei Reservoir is half way up Baoding Ridge, which is

about 12 kilometres to the east of the county town. At the upper reaches of the reservoir, a waterfall appears to drop from heaven, creating gigantic ripples in the pool below. The Baoding Waterfall, originating at 1,900 metres above sea level, bends nine times through its course of over 700 metres, giving rise to its pretty name — Nine-Heaven Colour Waterfall. The most awesome section is the fifth bend, occurring in a very steep and hazardous area.



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Huaping and Longsheng — Greenery and Resort

The Huaping Nature Reserve, which lies between Longsheng and Lingui counties in the northeastern part of Guangxi, is described as a "green treasure-trove". It covers an area of 130 square kilometres with rolling hills and endless forests, with Weiqing Ridge, standing 1,895 metres high, at its centre.

The primeval forests at Huaping abound in plants, with many rare specimens. There are over 1,300 kinds of higher plants alone, including some rare ones such as the five-leaved pine, red-bean fir and silver fir. The most precious is silver fir because most botanists, at one time, believed it had become extinct and existed only in fossil form in Germany. However, Huaping was found to be home to this "living fossil" — with a total of 1,040 trees — the oldest one being 300 years old. These tall, upright silver fir trees have become the symbol of Huaping.

In the forests there are more than 600 kinds of animals, including the South China Tiger, the Golden Coin Leopard, and the musk deer. A most peculiar and precious specimen also found here is the "side" fish. This fish has scales on one side of its body but not on the other side. The reason for this is that the male and female fish are always stuck together.

The hot springs of Longsheng lie by Ailing Stream, 32 kilometres to the northeast of the county town, in a valley surrounded by woods. With its lush forests and hot springs, the



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1.The "Landscaped Ribbon of Water" on the Zijiang River

2.Miao'er Mountain — the highest peak in South China (by Chen Yajiang)

3.Snail Peaks at Bajiaozhai in the morning sun (by Li Fangqing)

4.The Longsheng Hot Springs is an ideal resort in the forests.

5.After a spring rain, the bamboo shoots grow as tall as men on the banks of the Zijiang River.



place is a convalescent resort.

The temperature of the water in the hot springs varies between 45°C-58°C and flows at a rate of six litres per second. This mineral water has an extremely low sodium content, and so, is suitable for both drinking and bathing. It has strong medicinal effects and treats many illnesses, including skin disease, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, endocrine imbalance, and rheumatism. Holiday villas, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, and other recreation facilities have been built around the hot springs to attract visitors.

Daming Mountain, Yuanbao Mountain — Treasures Everywhere

Yuanbao Mountain, at 2,081 metres above sea level, in Rongshui County, is the third highest peak in Guangxi. Because the centre of the mountain is a little lower than nearby peaks, forming a silver ingot shape, the mountain earned its name Yuanbao — Silver Ingot. The peaks of the mountain are very steep, but on its summit there is a vast terrace imbedded with a clear pond. The summit is also an outstanding place to watch the sunrise.

Yuanbao Mountain has a distinct vertical distribution in its vegetation. Below 1,000 metres, there are typical central Asian tropical broad-leaved evergreen forests; between 1,000 and

1,500 metres, there are mixed subtropical mountainous evergreen and deciduous forests; above 1,500 metres, there are mixed high mountain coniferous and broad-leaved trees. The precious Guangxi Fir is also found here; this is a cotyledon plant of the Fourth Glacier Age now seen only in China.

The Daming Mountain Nature Reserve lies on the Tropic of Cancer and has a totally different type of environment from that of Yuanbao Mountain. Daming Mountain, also known as Mogan Mountain, arises at the borders of Wuming, Mashan, Shanglin and Binyang counties. It extends for about 100 kilometres and stretches 25 kilometres in width, with an average height of 1,200 metres above sea level. Its highest peak, Longtou Peak, is 1,760

metres high. The Daming Mountain area has a varied topography — high and steep mountain peaks and deep valleys, forming magnificent landscapes.

Daming Mountain is fully covered by a luxuriant growth of South Asian tropical evergreen broad-leaved primeval forests. Some examples of the species are the Chinese Hemlock, white-bean fir, spike fir, three-point fir, small-leaved fir, Tibetan mountain jasmine, and Daming Mountain pine. There are various rare animals living in these forests, such as short-tailed monkey, golden cat, civet, silver pheasant, musk deer, Assamese macaque and loris.

The seasonal changes on Daming Mountain are extremely spectacular. Classic poetry echoes the beauty seen here today: "The best aspects of Daming Mountain are its spring mist, winter snow, summer waterfalls and autumn clouds — a feast for your eyes in all four seasons."

Gupo Mountain and Dagui Mountain — Holiday Resorts

The primeval forests in Guangxi not only attract adventurers but also visitors who want to enjoy the special environment of the forests and enrich themselves through their love for nature. The forests contain large volumes of negative oxygen ions, hundreds or even thousands of times higher than that in cities, providing a





boost towards good health. The spring water contains many trace elements which are also beneficial to people's health. Visitors can relax, both physically and mentally, in this "forest bath" in the midst of birds singing and blossoming flowers.

Gupo Mountain and Dagui Mountain at Hezhou are two such ideal resorts. In Gupo Mountain State Forest Park, mountain peaks rise one in front of the other and forests extend endlessly. The mountain's main peak is 1,846 metres in elevation, the highest in eastern Guangxi. Throughout the forests and valleys there are seven spectacular roaring waterfalls and countless streams.

Due to its special natural environment and convenient transportation, holiday villas have been built in the valleys full of plum trees to make this idyllic mountain a tourist resort.

Luhua Hot Springs, at the foot of the mountain, has superb facilities. The water temperature reaches 60°C and flows at 40 cubic metres per hour. It can accommodate 180,000 guests



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every year.

Dagui Mountain State Forest Park is not as tranquil as Gupo Mountain since the No. 207 state highway runs by it. But in its characteristic houses of ethnic minorities and the well-equipped Guishan Recreation Centre, you can entertain yourself.

Dayao Mountain Range — Ethnic Customs in a Forest Setting

The name, Dayao (Great Yao) Mountain, indicates the location as well as the community of people living there. This is the home of the Yao ethnic group, who have their own unique customs.

The major peak of the Dayao Mountain Range is Shengtang (Holly Hall) Mountain, 1,979 metres above sea level. The main peak of Shengtang Mountain is formed by several pinnacles. When these spires poke through a sea of clouds, they look very much like a group of ancient castles of unusual architecture. Down on the mountain slopes there are "stone rivers" and "stone seas", traces of ancient glaciers. Shengtang Mountain is also rich in wildlife. *Gynostemma pentaphylla*, a unique local plant, has beneficial health effects similar to ginseng.

The most spectacular scene on Shengtang Mountain, viewed from Mabian'ao (Horse Whip Gully) at 1,500 metres, is the vast expanse of azaleas in late spring or early summer.

Lianhua (Lotus) Mountain, sitting to the north of Meicun Valley, 12 kilometres from Jinxiu County town, is a branch of the Dayao Mountain Range. Following a stone path through the forest, you will be surrounded by ancient trees towering up, entwined with vines. At various spots on the mountain there are small Yao temples for worshipping their ancestral god, King Pangu.

Tours to selected Yao villages have been offered in recent years. While touring this area, tourists will be entertained with performances of folk songs and dances, as well as demonstrations of unique customs. Visitors can also taste local Yao cuisine.

1. The mountain peaks crowd around Lotus Peak at Jinxiu
2. Fairy Waterfall at Gupo Mountain State Forest Park
3. Mt. Shengtang, the major peak of the Dayao Mountain (Courtesy of Guangxi Tourist Administration)
4. Dayao Mountain is an ideal tourist resort.
5. Sunrise seen from the top of Yuanbao Mountain (Photo by Ou Yongcheng)
6. A holiday resort in the valley of Gupo Mountain

A VACATION IN XISHUANGBANNA

Photos & article by Josh Cohen

It would be an easy one-hour flight from Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan Province, to Jinghong, capital of the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture. But on a tight budget, I decided to go in by bus and fly back.

The Road to Jinghong

Xishuangbanna is nestled against the borders of China, Myanmar and Laos. The mountains are a natural obstacle to the construction of train lines and so all goods enter and leave by truck via a long and tortuous route. I reserved tickets on the bus with Carlos, a half-Panamanian, half-American fellow teacher. We had to reserve bus seats three days ahead of time, as it was approaching the Chinese New Year. The Sunday of our departure we woke up in the darkness of the early morning to catch the seven o'clock bus. The bus was dirty and very full, mostly with local people going home for the holidays, but with also a few foreign and Chinese tourists mixed in. The road lifted and wound along tropical, wooded hillsides.

We continued until 10:30 that night when we reached a two-story breezeblock hotel where we debarked, ate, and went to bed. Considering that we had no choice as to where we stayed, the hotel did not gouge us badly. The next morning we were up and out by 6:30 a.m.

A few hours into the second day, the bus stopped at a candy striped bar across the road, and we debarked to show our passports — or permits, for the Chinese — to enter the region. The guard made a superficial check of our luggage for drugs and weapons, and then waved us through. Three in the afternoon, dusty and tired, we rolled into Jinghong.

We headed straight for the Banna Hotel, which had been recommended. This is certainly one of the most pleasant Chinese hotels I have ever stayed in. Unlike other hotels, it has nicely landscaped grounds and a relaxed atmosphere, rather like Xishuangbanna in general. The rooms were relatively cheap, and ranged from 16-bed dorms to doubles with shower. Alternatively, you can rent a room in one of the local Dai houses. The Dai stilt houses are remarkable structures, built of raw wood planks on thick wooden pilings six feet high. They are quite big, although the huge, sloping thatched roofs conceal the true size of the dwelling.

Roaming Around on a Bicycle

After recovering from the bus ride, I rented a bicycle to roam around. Jinghong retains the lazy atmosphere of tropical towns everywhere, from Louisiana to the Mediterranean. Pigs roam the streets on the edge of town. Poolrooms set their blue tables outside for slow games in the dry winter weather, and young men gather to play and talk. At the edge of town the paved streets peter into dirt roads through woods and villages of picturesque Dai stilt houses.

The Dai are the most populous minority in this area; Dai women are common in the towns and villages in long, dark flowered skirts, bright pink or yellow shirts, and dished straw hats. The Dai have more in common with their neighbours, the Thai and Burmese, than with the Han Chinese, and Dai writing resembles the loops of Thai script rather than Chinese characters.

The weather even in February was lovely. The mornings dawned cool, but by midday the temperature averaged around 30°C, and very dry, so any clothing washed and hung out on the line dried in minutes.

Young Buddhist Monks

One thing the visitor immediately notices in Xishuangbanna is the presence of Buddhist monks. These orange-robed monks seem to be everywhere; at times it seems that most of the young boys in



the region are monks. This is not because of any particular devoutness in the local population, but rather, as happens in the United States with Catholic schools, parents see a good Buddhist education as preferable to a poor state one, or possibly none at all, and so nearly all young men, regardless of temperament, are dutifully enrolled in a local monastery.

On a bicycle expedition one day with a friend, in the surrounding villages we came across a fair-sized Buddhist monastery. The head monk of this monastery was a plump, middle-aged man with red cheeks and a quick laugh. He gave us a tour through the student dormitory building, a single story ancient wood structure with a few large rooms subdivided into several smaller rooms by makeshift fabric walls, each room packed with beds, empty over the Spring Festival when the boys went home.

Afterwards we sat outside and chatted while he smoked and drank rice wine from a jam jar. He offered us some of what he was drinking, but we stuck to tea; in the bottom of the jar, curled up amongst the herbs and roots, was the biggest centipede I'd ever seen. He had been there since he was eight, he said. He smiled and joked, and drew two unusual maps of the world for us in chalk on the ground. We could not be sure how much he really believed in the deep Buddhist philosophy, or whether he was just having us on.

A Harvest Banquet

The people are generous and always willing to invite a foreigner in, especially foreigners with cameras. One day as I was out bicycling I came upon a barn with an open door. The chatter of many voices floated out from the dim interior, and I stuck my head inside to see that there was some sort of banquet going on. I was noticed and enthusiastically waved in. It was a harvest banquet given by the members of a collective farm, and I was invited to join. A short stocky woman with bright red cheeks and a hearty laugh was the obvious leader of my table. The young men of the table teased her constantly, and she quickly took them to task. She bade me sit down and stood behind me and literally forced rice wine into my mouth in

a strong display of generosity. The food here made the Dai restaurants seem gourmet by comparison: tiny bitter pickled roots, cooked sour herbs, and a bowl of what I think was congealed blood.

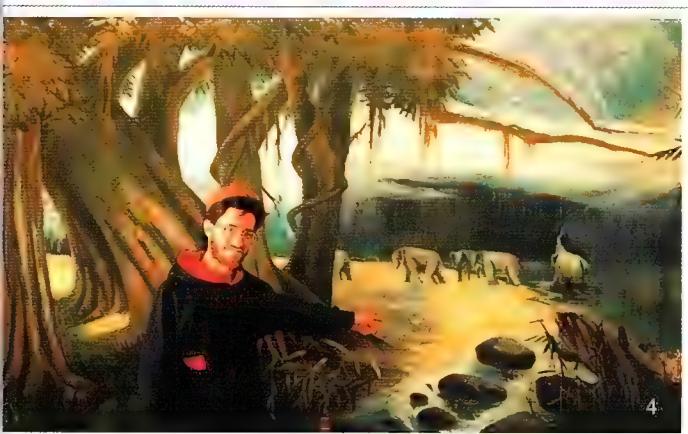
Afterward I was invited home with a family, where I unsuspectingly took out my camera to snap a few pictures and was immediately inundated with requests to photograph the whole family in various combinations. Only when the roll of film in my camera was finished would they let me go. I promised to send them prints.

The Rural Market at Damenlong

A week after I arrived at Jinghong, I travelled six hours by bus to Damenlong to witness the famous weekly market. Normally a small, sleepy border town, once a week the town becomes a carnival as people literally come out of the hills to buy and sell various goods, including clothing, food, animals, and lately, souvenirs.

Here the minorities in the region suddenly spread before me in a kaleidoscopic show. Most of the people at the market were women dressed in colourful ethnic clothing. There were the Dai as always, tall and beautiful in their flowered skirts and silk shirts; there were the Zhuang, shorter and brown, with gold teeth and colourful towels atop their heads; there were Yi and Buyi; there was a group of women in red striped skirts with black towels on their heads, and plaited baskets containing bundles of wheat for the market carried on their shoulders; there were even a few real hill people — short, dark women, dressed in black, barefoot, with wooden slats across their backs to carry home their purchases; there were many more tribes there than I could name, each distinctly marked by dress. The market began in the early morning when the air was still chilly, and by two or three was nearly over. It was the most stunning display of diversity I had ever seen in China.

Other than the market, Damenlong provides a restful place to spend a few days walking in the woods, or bicycling on the dirt roads. The villagers are very friendly, and welcome visitors. The landscape is forested, with some low lying paddy fields. One can turn onto a dirt road and find a monastery, or a small earthen stupa, a symbol of Buddhist worship, cracked and peeling in the weeds beside the road with its wind chimes tinkling calmly in the breeze. It would be perhaps 100, or 500 years old, and indifferent to the world around it. After the Chinese New Year festival, I grudgingly began to make plans to return to Hunan Province, where I was an English teacher. Only then did I find the relaxing atmosphere of the region was so addictive.



1. The author, dressed in the Dai costume, sitting at a stupa in Jinghong
2. Carlos, friend of author, mingling with the local Dai people
3. Minority women selling their produce at the Damenlong rural market
4. Photo of the author in front of a huge mural

Opera 'Turandot' Performed in Beijing

In the coming September, *Turandot*, the final work and a masterpiece of Giacomo Puccini, will be staged in the Forbidden City in Beijing. With Zhang Yimou, three-time Oscar nominee, as the stage director, and Mr. Zubin Mehta as the conductor, the performance is a great event of co-operation between the musicians of Maggio Musicale Fionentino and Chinese artists. This lavish production will involve over 1,000 artists, performers and craftsmen. Over 200 gorgeously prepared ancient Chinese costumes will be displayed through the opera. Zhang Yimou believes that, with the unique setting in the Chinese imperial palace, the Forbidden City, the performance of the opera will be even more successful than the previous one in Florence.

The performance is organised by the China Performing Arts Agency. In Hong Kong, the Euro-China Cultural Exchange Project, a bilateral cultural exchange group dedicated to strengthening international communication and in-depth collaboration through cultural events, held a money-raising ceremony for *Turandot* in Beijing. Funds raised will be contributed to the Spring Blossom Project Foundation to support rural girls for their basic education.

Attraction on Upper Reaches of Yellow River

Lijaxia Hydropower Station, together with a nearby national forest park, has become a tourist attraction on the upper reaches of the Yellow River. Over the past three years, 30,000 tourists have visited the power station in Northwest China's Qinghai Province, where visitors can mount the magnificent 165-metre-high dam and ride a motorboat tour on the 32-square-kilometre reservoir.

Hot Springs at Mount Emei, Sichuan

A large hot spring has been discovered at Mount Emei, one of the famous Buddhist mountains in China. Tourists can now bathe in a hot spring on this sacred mountain after pilgrimage or admiring its fantastic scenery. At present, water gushes from the spring at a rate of 1,500 cubic metres a day. With the addition of a pump, the rate can be boosted to 3,000 cubic metres a day. With a temperature of 45°C and good healing effects, the spring water comes from five water-bearing strata in the rock formation at a depth of 1,000 metres.

Animals Back, Beijing

Traces of many wild animals have been found on the mountains in suburban Beijing due to the local people's efforts in planting more trees in the area. According to wild animal experts, traces of leopards were discovered in the Lingshan Mountain area to the west of Beijing proper, and cries of wolves were heard by villagers in Yanqing County northeast of Beijing. The awareness of environmental and wildlife protection has been greatly strengthened among the local residents in these areas.

Crocodile Park, Fuzhou

Fuzhou Crocodile Park, the largest of its kind in China, opened to the public recently in Fuzhou, capital of East China's Fujian Province. Besides a crocodile pond, the park also includes a scientific and cultural zone, a recreational centre for teenagers and a zoo of rare animals. With an investment of 50 million yuan (US\$6 million), the 13.3-hectare park will import a total of 1,500 crocodiles from Thailand.

More US Tourists Head to China

About 700,000 visitors from the United States are expected to visit China this year, some 16 percent up from 1997, according to news from the China National Tourism Administration. Meanwhile, people from the Republic of Korea and Thailand dropped by a big margin, and those from Japan, Malaysia and Singapore went down slightly, affected by the Asian financial crisis. The continued growth of the US economy, the strength of the US dollar, closer Sino-US relations, cheaper air fares, and simplified visa procedures for American visitors are main reasons for the surge of US tourists to China, according to US travel agency representatives. In addition, the increased diversification of China's tourism market and standardisation of reception work have also likely contributed to attracting more tourists. China boasts more than 2,400 star-rated hotels and 120 first-category travel agencies meeting the standards for a full international travel service.

Museum of Fossils, Hangzhou

A new display hall specialising in fossils opened recently in the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History in Hangzhou, capital of East China's Zhejiang. Displayed in the Fossils Hall are 2,000 rare examples chosen from the museum's total collection of over 80,000 fossil items, including the 12-metre-long skeletal remains of a grey whale, the largest ever found in China, and the fossilised remains of the famous "Confucius Bird". The hall has six sections for different exhibitions, such as dinosaurs, marine animals and the history of geology.

The museum plans to offer new exhibits every six months and to allow visitors to participate in various scientific demonstrations.

Qomolangma Beckoning Tourists

Sources from the Tourism Administration of the Tibet Autonomous Region said that some 7,000 tourists from across the world visited Mount Qomolangma (Everest) last year, and the number is expected to increase this year.

The world's highest peak previously attracted only mountaineers, but now it has become a hot tourist spot for general tourists. Most travellers have no trouble reaching the base camp, which is located some 5,200 metres above sea level. The best season to make the trip is early summer or autumn, when there is no snowfall or heavy rain. A nature reserve has been set up in the mountain area and foreign-invested hotels are expected to be built there.

Women's Museum, Xi'an

A unique women's museum has been set up at Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an, capital of Northwest China's Shaanxi Province. The museum presents the folk culture of women in five categories, including women's "secret scripts", wedding clothes, birth customs and their art works of knitting and paper-cuts.

The "secret scripts", emerging in the early Qing Dynasty, were a means of communication for women to express their affection, hatred and desire for happiness. Written on paper or on fans, embroidered on handkerchiefs, and bound in books, the scripts are becoming a lost art. They can be read by only a handful of rural women in Hunan Province today. The museum was established by the Women's Research Centre, a non-governmental organisation at Shaanxi Normal University.

Three Cities Added to UNESCO List

The Ancient City of Pingyao in Shanxi Province, Lijiang Old Town in Yunnan Province, and Suzhou Classical Gardens in Jiangsu Province have been added to the Heritage List of UNESCO. This is the first time that Chinese cities of historical and cultural value have been included in the World Cultural Heritage List. Previously, 16 sites in China were on the UNESCO list. These include the Great Wall and the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Dunhuang Grottoes in Gansu Province and the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region.

Pingyao is an outstanding prototype of the life of the Han people during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It presents a picture of cultural, social, economic and religious developments during that period. Lijiang is the seat of the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County in Yunnan Province. The ancient town is known for its remaining unique traditions, including the Dongba culture, the Naxi ancient music and the Baisha murals. It is also known for its architecture which reflects the Naxi ethnic style with outside influences. The Suzhou Classical Gardens are a typical example of perfect Chinese gardens which have achieved a sense of serenity by a unique combination of art, nature and ingenuity.

1,800 -Year-Old Brick, Shaanxi

A large number of bricks with moulded designs made 1,800 years ago have been discovered in some tombs in Northwest China's Shaanxi Province. The tombs, four metres by 2.5 metres in size, are believed to have been built during the early Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220).

More Archaeology Diggings

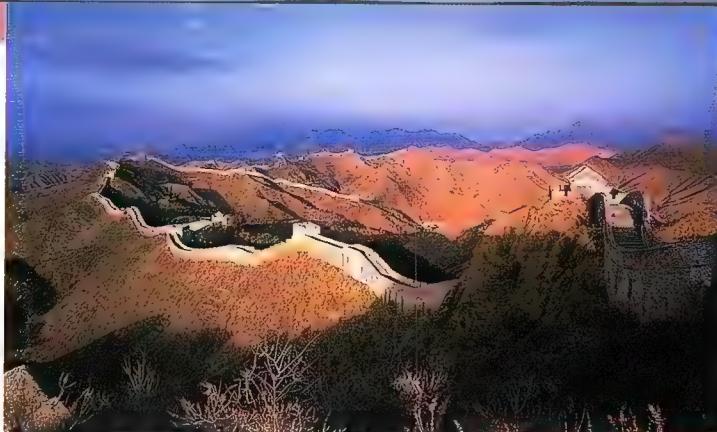
Many new findings by Chinese archaeologists have been reported recently. An ancient mausoleum more than 2,000 years old, for example, has been unearthed in East China's Zhejiang Province. At a hill top in the outskirts of Shaoxing which was the capital city of the State of Yue of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), the tomb is supposed to belong to a king of the Yue.

The mausoleum covers an area of 100,000 square metres, with an entrance tunnel 46 metres long, 10 metres wide and 14 metres high. Its middle chamber contains a large wooden coffin, over six metres long and 1.1 metres wide. Many jade pieces and bronzes have been found in it.

In Liaoning Province in the Northeast, a large cache of relics dating back to the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24) have been discovered in Xiuyan Manchu Autonomous County. These include pieces of bricks, bronzes, pottery and iron articles. Archaeologists believe that these findings will provide valuable clues for research related to the culture and history of the Western Han Dynasty.

More Visitors to Mt. Wuyi

Wuyi Mountain, a well-known scenic spot in east China's Fujian Province, played host to 102,000 overseas visitors in 1997, an increase of 42 percent over the previous year. Meanwhile, it received 1.46 million domestic visitors, setting a record in its history. The city gained 569 million yuan from tourism last year, which accounts for 38 percent of its gross domestic product. Business volume from overseas tourism totalled US\$11.5 million. The scenic spot has so far 28 travel services and 130 hotels.

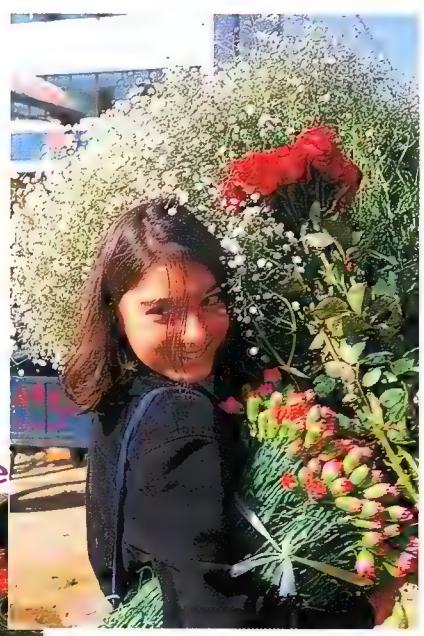


The Great Wall Zhai Dongfeng

*Ever tried to climb **the Great Wall**? Whatever your answer is, it is worthy to note the special report featuring the Great Wall in our next issue. In the suburbs of Beijing, the magnificent and precipitous sections of the Great Wall not only extend vast distances, but also possess the glamour of ever-changing scenery. However, in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, where some sections of the wall have already fallen into ruins, you will see different scenes — cave dwellings of the country folk built nearby and wandering cattle and sheep...*

We also talk to a couple who are great fans of this world-famous construction. They spent 10 years walking through the wall, leaving their footsteps on every corner of it, and had taken many fabulous photos... It is commonly known that the weather of Kunming is like spring all the year round. But have you ever heard of a "flower village" by the side of Dianchi Lake? There, flowers of all four seasons are in bloom all the time, and more than a hundred types are exported daily by air...

Li Zhixiong Flower Village



*There is a **wild life park** in Qinhuangdao in North China's Hebei Province and it is the "paradise for your secret date with the animals". However, someone's misbehaviour had irritated the tiger and suddenly the beast struck out with its paw...*

Zhai Dongfeng

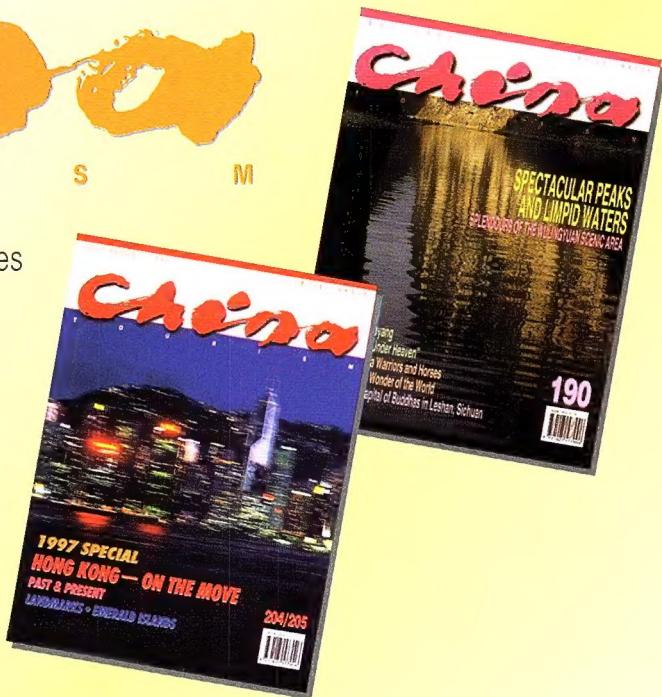
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